

### **History and Significance of the Central Section**

The Central section of the Harlem River study area intersects a number of distinct neighborhoods, including Marble Hill, Inwood, East Harlem, and parts of the Bronx. Discrete portions of these communities unite to form an important transitional zone for the entire Harlem River. The Central section is geographically bound by Macomb's Dam Bridge to the south, the Major Deegan Expressway to the east, Highbridge Park and 10th Avenue to the west, and the Broadway Bridge to the north.

This portion of the study area can be understood as an in-between region that contains the least amount of developed land along the Harlem River, while including a large number of public resources. In contrast, the Northern and Southern sections are more clearly defined by their predominantly residential or industrial uses. Due in part to its steep topography, the Central area did not develop as quickly or fully as neighboring sections. As a result, this narrow fringe has provided adequate space for uses typically pushed out of other neighborhoods during New York City's development, including a mix of transportation and infrastructure, industry, recreation, and high-density housing. These divergent uses coexist in the Central section, lending a character not commonly found in the other parts of the Harlem River study area. The historic uses and attitudes towards the Harlem River and its waterfront in the Central section have the ability to inform future perceptions of the notable resources so that these assets are properly understood and valued.

Starting from the southern boundary of the Central area, one immediately encounters diverse patterns of growth and use. For example, two large recreational sites, Highbridge Park and Roberto Clemente Park, provide different histories of parkland development in the area. Highbridge Park, located on the Manhattan side of the river between Macomb's Dam Bridge and Dyckman Street, was assembled piecemeal by the city from 1867 to 1960. Making use of undeveloped land, Highbridge initially provided a "resort" destination that responded to the recreational needs of a privileged class. Directly across the river is Roberto Clemente Park, which spans from West 176<sup>th</sup> Street to West 180<sup>th</sup> Street between the Harlem River and the Major Deegan Expressway. Opened in 1973, a year earlier than the River Park Towers housing development built within the park, it is located on a former industrial site. The only New York State Park found in the Bronx, it serves the local community, a mix of middle- and lower-income residents from a predominantly minority population.

Further north, the industrial waterfront of Inwood, located between Sherman's Creek and West 216<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Harlem River, historically served as the site of objectionable facilities that meet the basic needs of the city. This section of riverfront, portions of which are owned by Consolidated Edison and various city agencies, is the location of several utilitarian structures, including the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority Maintenance Yard and the Manhattan Incinerator Plant. Fordham Landing, just north of the University Heights Bridge on the Bronx shore, is a desolate piece of industrial property adjacent to the potential site of a new public housing development on the waterfront. These sites, typical to the neighborhood's character, are perceived as nuisances and derelict properties, though they have ample potential.

At the northern most part of the Central area are the Marble Hill Houses. These structures are representative of the numerous housing projects located in this portion of the river. Run by the New York City Housing Authority, as are the majority of the high-density residential structures in the study area, the Marble Hill Houses are typical brick, "slab-style," multi-story apartment buildings meant to serve a community in need of decent, affordable housing. Located sporadically throughout the Central section, structures of this type comprise the most recent layer of development as a response to contemporary issues affecting the region, including poverty, reduced housing stock, and unemployment.

Due to the fact that the Central area of the river is composed of pieces of neighborhoods, the demographic information supplied herein will cover the entire span of the section (refer to Appendix II for more detail). 5,772 units (not including the Marble Hill Houses due to census tract restrictions) provide housing for the smallest total population of the three sections of the Harlem River study area. Only 15,561

individuals reside here, totaling just 14.4% of the entire study area and 0.2% of New York City.<sup>1</sup> Of the population residing here, 22% are foreign born and 41% are ethnically Hispanic. 60% of the population is black, 11% white, and 29% are considered “some other race”. The unemployment rate within the Central area is 23%, with the median per capita income at \$7,214. The median per capita income for the entire study area is \$13,848 and New York City’s is \$23,357. 37% of the households in the area make less than \$10,000 a year and 42.6% are living below the poverty level.

The Central area differs from the regions to the north and south with regard to its topography. For an extensive portion of its length, the landscape is characterized by steep terrain, averaging some two hundred feet above sea level in Highbridge Park and approximately one hundred fifty feet above sea level along the Bronx side, east of the Major Deegan Expressway. In contrast, at its northern and southern ends, the bulk of the Central area’s land mass averages twenty-five feet above sea level. The lowlands along the eastern shore were ideal for routing the railroad right-of-way, established in the mid-eighteenth century and still active today. This change in elevation along the river’s course is reflected in the degree and types of development found along its edges: from heavy industry and manufacturing in the South Bronx, through parkland in the center, and back to industry and maritime use in the north. Due to the lack of concentrated built fabric in the Central area, the significant resources, their challenges, and our proposals for them are presented according to themes of use rather than neighborhood.

### **Transportation and Infrastructure:**

The study of the transportation arteries in the Central section is important to understanding the history of the Harlem River and New York City. On the Manhattan side, the Harlem River Drive connects northern to central Manhattan on the footprint of the Harlem River Speedway (1870s). On the Bronx side, the Major Deegan Expressway links the southern Bronx to parts of New York State immediately north of the city (since 1938), and beyond (1950s extension), providing links to the New York State Parkway system and other regions.<sup>1</sup> These highways, which define boundaries separating the community from the river, symbolize the beginning of the automobile era and the physical manifestation of Robert Moses’ public works vision. Though his vision produced substantial recreational benefits for the greater metropolitan area, these parkways and roads function as impediments to local access in the Harlem River Study Area.

Running alongside the Major Deegan Expressway are vestiges of the railroads that were once critical to the economic vitality of the local communities and New York City. In 1851, an extensive rail system was completed in the Central section of the study area, connecting lower Manhattan to communities north of the city as far as the Hudson River Valley. During the industrial age, trains and ships were the primary means of passenger and freight transport. These made viable the transportation of raw goods to the industries that were emerging along the river’s margins, and transported the labor force that fueled New York City’s effervescent manufacturing sector.

Railroads competed with strong shipping activity on the Harlem River and nearby ports; the existing swing bridges and remnants of once busy docks and piers bear witness to this era. These land and water activities were of paramount importance to the economic development of the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other historic uses for the river include passenger ferry routes. As early as the late seventeenth century, a ferry service linked what is today 125<sup>th</sup> Street to the Spuyten Duyvil Creek and Kingsbridge area. This emphasis on cross-river transportation continued with the construction of several bridges connecting the Manhattan and Bronx sides of the river.

There are five bridges that cross the Harlem River in the Central area: University Heights Bridge, Washington Bridge, Alexander Hamilton Bridge, High Bridge and Macomb’s Dam Bridge. These include the earliest extant bridge on the Harlem River, High Bridge (1848), and the most recently constructed, the Alexander Hamilton (1964). These two bridges as well as the Washington Bridge (1889) are fixed arch spans and are situated at high grades in the topography at approximately 100 to 160 feet above sea

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<sup>1</sup> Importance of this is relative, since the Central section is sparsely populated, but provides opportunities to the larger region, including residents to the north and south.

level. The other two bridges, University Heights (1895/1906) and Macomb's Dam (1895) are at lower grades, approximately twenty feet above sea level.

### **Industrial Sites and Structures:**

In the mid-nineteenth century, as the engineering marvels of the High Bridge and Croton Aqueduct reached completion, a process of attempting to make use of the narrow shoreline began to reshape the region's natural character. The Bronx waterfront in the Central area is characterized by steep terrain and shoreline acreage fronting on relatively narrow, shallow reaches of the Harlem River. These conditions inhibited industrial development on a scale more commonly found in the communities of Morrisania, Mott Haven, and Port Morris to the south. In the absence of ideal building sites, successive bands of transportation infrastructure were laid along the river's north-south axis, beginning with the Harlem Line rails in 1851 and culminating in the Major Deegan Expressway over one hundred years later. On the artificial fill that expanded the acreage available alongside these rails, smaller industries thrived for a period of time, including commercial boat building and coal storage and distribution facilities; however, these became obsolete in the early twentieth century and their remnants have all but disappeared. In their place, substantial recreation and housing developments have grown; however, utility and transportation infrastructures, often derelict, continue to dominate the Bronx waterfront.

On the Manhattan shore, working upriver from the section's southern boundary, we find little in the way of waterfront with historically industrial or maritime character until we arrive at Sherman's Creek, at the lower end of the Inwood Flats, where Tenth Avenue, Dyckman Street and Harlem River Drive converge. Here are the remnants of a natural water feature, which at one point extended much deeper into Manhattan, and was probably the mouth of a creek that began near the present day Cloisters Museum. North of the creek lies the Inwood waterfront, a large portion of which was the property of the Dyckman family estate until the late nineteenth-century. These lots, which are generally only ten feet above the water level, were considered a potential site for the World's Fair in 1893, but this plan went unrealized.<sup>2</sup> An amusement park along the lines of Coney Island, which exploited waterfront access for ferries and rides, was proposed and the land there leased in 1904, but the venture collapsed.<sup>3</sup> The Manhattan street grid, laid out in 1811 under the Randel Plan, extended optimistically into the river in this district circa 1897; however, there is no indication it reached completion, and today is characterized by streets abruptly ending at the waterfront.<sup>4</sup>

The lowlands north of Sherman's Creek provided few of the amenities offered in the communities further south, i.e. close freight railways and a deepwater port. Expansion of the elevated service north along Manhattan and increasing power demand in the first decade of the twentieth century led to the construction here of a large power generating facility and a massive railway maintenance yard. These set the tone for successive generations of public infrastructure built nearby, which continue to define the character of this section of the region's waterfront. While these offer little in the way of historic fabric in the traditional sense, they provide a context for interpreting the diverse layers of development characterizing the Harlem River waterfront and its environs. Even in the absence of original structures, patterns of land use and limits to accessibility persist. Outdated zoning, low property valuations, and traffic congestion have the potential to plague redevelopment in the area, where heavy industrial use has been curtailed, supplanted primarily by commercial uses and sporadic, high-density housing.

### **Recreation:**

Recreation has long been a characteristic use within the Central part of the Harlem River study area and remains an enduring feature within the layers of mixed industrial, commercial, and residential uses present along the Harlem River. The steep topography of much of the land within this section made many of these areas particularly unsuitable for development of any kind. Where the existing topographic conditions could not meet the demands of industry, infrastructure, and housing for land, the edges of the river were physically manipulated, establishing some of the area's most significant recreational opportunities, from the Harlem River Speedway of the late nineteenth century, to Roberto Clemente State Park in the 1970s. Thus, recreation in the Central section of the study area has retained its importance within the developmental history of the Harlem River study area.

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### **High-Density Housing Developments:**

Emphasis has been placed on the Central section of the Harlem River as a location for small industrial and recreational use; however, the area is also home to several public housing developments. These reflect a popular social ideology of the mid-twentieth century, during which local, state, and federal governments attempted to address urban problems such as high population density, overcrowded slums, and plights such as unemployment and poverty. Four of these were built in the early 1950s, a time when the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) output was at its height. It was during this period that the Dyckman Houses (1951), Colonial Park Houses (1951), Marble Hill Houses (1952) and Highbridge Houses (1954) were constructed. Two later developments include the Polo Grounds Towers (1968) and the River Park Towers (1974).

Similar to the European approach to social housing, which incorporates recreational and educational activities in high-density housing, the goal along the Harlem River was to provide shelter for the increased population of the city and improve living conditions for those "'special cases,' perpetually hobbled by their inability to escape the cycle of poverty, unemployment, ill health and social deprivation."<sup>5</sup> The designs were based on health, efficiency, and convenience; they emphasized light, air, views, greenspace, and amenities such as playgrounds, laundry facilities, and community centers. Constructed according to two building plans, the cruciform plan structures maximized light and ventilation, while the slab-type constructions increased cost efficiency.

Although several of the developments did offer improvements in living situations, it is important to note the underlying implications of these projects. Their location along the Harlem River is a reflection of the low cost and value of the waterfront land. Like most urban renewal, the majority of the developments were built on the same sites as the slums they replaced. These buildings functioned to condense certain groups of the population; according to the 1950 National Housing Census, the occupants of public housing were close to 50% nonwhite, although nonwhites made up only 11% of the total national population.<sup>6</sup> Although the location along the waterfront does provide increased cross ventilation and light for the public housing, the views of the nearby industrial buildings and the derelict plots of land are a reminder of why the public housing is situated along this desolate area.

### **Significant Resources**

With little built fabric, the resources in the Central section of the Harlem River Study Area are of a different nature than those in the North or South. Large-scaled or public uses such as transportation, infrastructure, and recreation define the character of the area's manmade structures and landscapes. Although not all are worthy of preservation in the same manner as the historic structures typically found in the North and South, their importance to the Central area's development and usage necessitates listing and qualifies them as significant historical resources.

### **Transportation and Infrastructure:**

*Railroads*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*Circa 1840-1851*

*Architect: N/A*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Educational Element*

Historically, railroads in the Central Harlem River study area were placed on the river's margins, along the low lying shore of the Bronx. Eventually their presence provided a new foundation against which to place

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infill and thus expand waterfront acreage. The railroads functioned as a path to transport raw materials and finished products to meet the demands of expanding industry on the Bronx side. They also served as a commuter line connecting the residential neighborhoods of Westchester County and Hudson River Valley to New York City. The railroad system played a vital role in the industrial development of the Bronx and East Harlem, as well as in substantially dictating the extent of waterfront investment on the Bronx shore of the Harlem River.

*\*Croton Aqueduct*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1842*

*Architect: John B. Jervis, engineer*

*Landmark Status: National Historic Landmark (1992)*

The original Croton Aqueduct was one of the great municipal public works projects of the nineteenth century. It provided clean water from the Croton River to city residents, who needed fresh water to extinguish fires and to mitigate the diseases that were prevalent in the area during that time. John B. Jervis, who engineered the Erie, Delaware, and Hudson Canals, designed the Croton Aqueduct, the construction of which began in 1837. It opened in 1842, and was hailed around the world as an engineering masterpiece. The Croton Aqueduct was the principle source of water for Manhattan until the 1890 opening of the "New" Croton Aqueduct. Built nearby the old aqueduct underneath the Harlem River, it provided New Yorkers with an even greater volume of water. The "New" Croton Aqueduct is still in use today supplementing other, separate water tunnels for the City of New York.

*\* High Bridge*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1848*

*Architect: John B. Jervis, engineer*

*Landmark Status: New York City Landmark (1970), National Register (1972)*

High Bridge, which was part of the original Croton Aqueduct system, carried fresh water across the Harlem River from the Bronx to Manhattan. Finished six years after the completion of the aqueduct itself (a temporary siphon carried the water across the river while the bridge was being built), its design was influenced by the typical ancient Roman aqueduct. The engineering of the bridge was monumental because, at the time of its construction, the length and height of a grade-level crossing demanded an enormous structure, the size of which had not been built in the United States. Upon its completion in 1848, the bridge and surrounding areas of the future Highbridge Park quickly became a recreation destination for people from throughout the region. Its pedestrian walkway, scenic views and monumental profile were repeated prolifically in paintings, drawings and etchings. Since the 1960s the bridge has been closed to the public because of structural and safety issues.

*\* Washington Bridge*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1889*

*Architect: John McAlpine, engineer*

*Landmark Status: New York City Landmark (1982)*

As one of the oldest extant Harlem River bridges, Washington Bridge retains a connection with the Harlem River's pastoral and industrial history in its design and construction. It is considered a marvel of engineering and aesthetics, referred to shortly after its opening as "one of the few structures of a public character that New York City can reasonably show with pride to strangers."<sup>7</sup>

Connecting the two upland areas of High Bridge on the Manhattan side and Fordham on the Bronx side, the bridge was required to span a much larger distance than bridges at lower grades. Its two large steel arches span the river and the railroad tracks on the narrow flats of the Bronx shore. The bridge approaches are made of smaller masonry arches that reference the High Bridge just south of it. The

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recreational Harlem River Speedway was constructed under its Manhattan-shore arches not long after the bridge opened, thus completing its status as part of a picturesque landscape of the city. Its connection to the Central section of the Harlem River study area and the larger New York City area was “updated” in 1952 when it was connected to the George Washington Bridge over the Hudson River by the High Bridge Interchange. This project dramatically increased vehicular traffic on the Washington Bridge and in the Central area. Today the bridge is a major local traffic artery that carries over 57,000 vehicles a day, but remains an important asset historically, aesthetically, and culturally to the Central area.

*\* Macomb’s Dam Bridge*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1895*

*Architect: Alfred Pancoast Boller, engineer*

*Landmark Status: New York City Landmark (1992)*

Macomb’s Dam Bridge is the oldest extant swing bridge in New York City. Constructed in 1895 by the bridge engineer Alfred P. Boller (who would have a prolific career on the Harlem River), the bridge is actually one in a succession of several built on the site since 1835.<sup>8</sup> Its design is integrally connected to national and local investment in the Harlem River as a major shipping waterway with the completion of the Harlem River Shipping Canal in 1895. Prior to the completion of the Shipping Canal, legislation was passed that required the bridges on the Harlem River be at least twenty-four feet over the water if a movable span.<sup>9</sup> Although the current bridge’s immediate predecessor fulfilled that requirement, most of the earlier swing bridges on the river were not technologically advanced enough to accommodate increased land traffic due to slow opening and closing times. Improved design was required to maintain use of the new waterway and still address land use. Macomb’s Dam was the first bridge chosen for upgrading in conjunction with the Shipping Canal, and the new span was applauded as being both advanced in engineering and aesthetically pleasing.<sup>10</sup> It would become a cultural landmark when it was used as the footpath from the Polo Grounds in Manhattan to Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Today it carries over 39,000 vehicles a day and remains a major route from Manhattan to Yankee Stadium.

*\* University Heights Bridge*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1895/1906*

*Architect: Alfred Pancoast Boller, engineer*

*Landmark Status: New York City Landmark (1984)*

University Heights Bridge was also constructed in 1895, just after the Macomb’s Dam Bridge and the completion of the Harlem River Shipping Canal. Almost identical, the two bridges were both designed by Alfred P. Boller, and are considered to be the engineer’s masterpieces on the Harlem River. Originally the University Heights Bridge sat at what is now the Broadway Bridge (also referred to as Ship Canal Bridge) further north on the river. The structure served the local traffic well enough, but was soon deemed inadequate for the completion of the Interborough Rapid Transit line through Marble Hill in 1908, due to its inability to carry a second deck for subway trains. Rather than discard the bridge, the Bridge Commissioner, Gustav Lindenthal, suggested the Boller design be reused at the location of 207th and Fordham Road, where a bridge had been needed for some time. The bridge was floated down to its current location in 1906, eleven years after its original construction.<sup>11</sup> It proved to be a needed connection for vehicles and pedestrians between the University Heights area in the Bronx and Inwood in Manhattan. In 1984, one of the pedestrian walkways was removed in order to widen the way for vehicular traffic. Today this City Landmark serves over 46,000 vehicles per day.

*Major Deegan Expressway*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1935-1956*

*Architect: Regional Plan Association (RPA) - New York-New Jersey-Connecticut*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Educational Element*

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The Major Deegan Expressway, built between 1935 and 1956, is an expression of attempts of the time to effectively address traffic problems in New York City. The presence of the expressway today seriously affects the overall character of the Central Harlem River study area; this effect extends into the Southern portion of the study area. Historically, this structure echoes the impact of the automobile era in the shaping of American cities during that period. It represents gestures of modernist design on an urban and regional scale, which were often characterized by massive extension of road systems and suburban expansion.

*Alexander Hamilton Bridge (Cross-Bronx Expressway)*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1964*

*Architect: Ernest Clark*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The Alexander Hamilton Bridge, part of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, is the most recently built crossing on the Harlem River. It was completed in 1964 for the purpose of relieving traffic on the Washington Bridge, after the 1952 High Bridge Interchange project significantly increased the amount of vehicles in the area. As part of an eight-lane roadway, it currently carries 175,000 vehicles per day. The Hamilton's single large steel arch references its immediate neighbors, the Washington and High Bridges, on either side of it. The bridge and highway have a dramatic impact on the area. The elaborate system of steel interchange loops connecting it to the Major Deegan Expressway on the Bronx shore has a confusing effect on the riverfront, emphasizing transportation above all other uses. The concrete arches of the elevated connector road on the Manhattan side clearly reference the nearby older bridges and are aesthetically compelling. The elevated structure isolates the section of Highbridge Park above which it hovers and presents a psychological barrier to people wishing to access the Manhattan Greenway below.

**Industrial Sites and Structures:**

*Consolidated Edison Property (ConEd)*

*Block/Lot: 2183/1*

*Constructed 1908; Currently Demolished*

*Architect: unknown*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Educational Element*

At the southern end of the western Inwood waterfront are lots owned by Consolidated Edison (ConEd), which front on Academy Street, Sherman's Creek, and the Harlem River. This was the location of an eight-story, coal fired power generating station originally constructed in 1908. Although it generated some 1200 horsepower from its engines, belching smoke and ash while spoiling the surrounding land with wastewater runoff, the power station coexisted for some time with numerous small boathouses across the narrow creek and at least one onshore café, named Durando's.<sup>12</sup> The nuisance of the plant's noise, water, and air pollution was most likely a major factor in the stunted development of the lots nearby, and was the subject of at least one lawsuit by adjacent landowners and residents seeking to shutter the plant as early as the mid-1920s. The plant outlived a similar one located at the intersection of West 216<sup>th</sup> Street and Ninth Avenue where a "car shed" that served the Third Avenue Elevated Railroad was also located for a period of time in the early twentieth-century.

The Sherman Creek plant was dismantled in 1995 but has left large amounts of PCB-contaminated soil both onshore and in the creek. Its presence on the corner of this large waterfront parcel binds a district that evolved to contain primarily warehouses and public infrastructure, the character of which is still marginal in its underutilization.

*\_MTA 207<sup>th</sup> Street Maintenance Yard*

*Block/Lot: 2189/1*

*Circa 1910*

*Architect: unknown*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Individual Designation (National Register)*

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The low topography and irregular waterfront of western Inwood, where no engineered bulkhead was erected consistently, created ideal locations in the pre-industrial era for small boat building yards as well as coal and lumberyards. Following the completion of the West Side elevated lines to the Bronx in 1908, these vernacular structures were quickly absorbed by construction in the 1910s of the sprawling NYC Rapid Transit System Maintenance Yard. The yard spanned from 207<sup>th</sup> Street to 215<sup>th</sup> Street and from Tenth Avenue to the Harlem River. This complex, which consists of numerous structures and facilities of varying construction dates, presents a tall, attractive brick façade for many blocks along Tenth Avenue. On the other side it fronts the river with dock facilities and a substantial bulkhead. The yard speaks to the great importance that was assigned to the young transit system. It also addresses the issue of placing public infrastructure on lands with marginal value and character, as it lies outside the perimeter of the more densely populated residential communities to the south and west in Manhattan.

*\_Manhattan Incinerator Plant*

*Block/Lot: 2212/1*

*1934 & 1939*

*Architect: Frank S. Parker*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Individual Designation (New York City and National Register)*

One block north, at 215<sup>th</sup> Street and Tenth Avenue, are the unmistakable smokestacks and facades of the Manhattan incinerator plant and associated facilities of the NYC Department of Sanitation, which were designed by Frank S. Parker. This cluster of public works projects dating from 1934 and 1939, respectively, illustrates the enormous effort on the part of the New York City government to deal with the ever-growing problem of debris and refuse. In response to years of complaints and campaigning, incinerators, or “destructors” as they were known, were constructed throughout Manhattan and the Bronx to replace the practice of ocean dumping and landfill. They were completed at the expense of local air quality. The sanitation buildings in Inwood signified progress for the city as a whole, and their simple, classical lines and prominent stacks did so with dignity. Yet their location and by-products adversely impacted the communities into which these buildings were inserted. The function of these facilities appears to have been in no way related to the riverfront, since garbage was trucked in for disposal; however, their proximity to other major infrastructures, set against the backdrop of an increasingly polluted and industrialized Harlem River, no doubt contributed to diminished land values and perceptions of area resources.

Currently, the incinerator does not function in its original capacity. All of the structures serve either an administrative, storage, or parking role, yet they retain most of their historic fabric. Their proximity to the waterfront without any real need for access remains troublesome for planners seeking to increase public space available for greenway alongside the river. As monuments to an era of increased governmental activity on behalf of its constituency, the buildings firmly anchor the surrounding area; yet by advancing the city’s interests on the whole, they subjected this area and local population to blight.

**Recreation:**

*Sherman’s Creek*

*10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between Dyckman Street and Academy Street, Inwood*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*Turn of the nineteenth century*

*Architect: N/A*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The physical presence of recreation on and along the Harlem River has waxed and waned over time. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Harlem River was being celebrated as a center for the sport of rowing in New York City. The sport has its genesis in the days when rowboats were the earliest means of transportation around New York Harbor. Oarsmen that worked off Whitehall Street in Lower Manhattan were known to have engaged in races and rivalry with their peers, which often drew an audience and eventually a following. From that time, rowing quickly evolved into a club activity, and the sport gained

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widespread popularity, especially after its appearance in the 1900 Olympic games. By the 1910s, Sherman's Creek was the location of choice for boat clubs, many of which were social as well as rowing clubs created by local immigrant communities. Often these clubs hosted other sports in addition to rowing, such as handball, bowling, and billiards."<sup>13</sup> Although the last remnants of the original boating structures are gone, the spirit of rowing on the Harlem lives in the contemporary boating structures that remain near Sherman's Creek. A new boating structure that will be floating in Swindler's Cove perpetuates this legacy and may spur renewed interest in rowing through its educational programs for the local youth.

*\_Highbridge Park*

*Manhattan: West 155<sup>th</sup> to Dyckman Street, between Harlem River Drive and Amsterdam Avenue  
Bronx: Harlem River and Major Deegan Expressway, West 174<sup>th</sup> Street to Alexander Hamilton Bridge  
Block/Lot: 2106/1  
1867-1960*

*Architect: N/A*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Individual Designation (New York City Scenic Landmark)*

Due to the difficult terrain comprising today's Highbridge Park, roughly stretching from West 155<sup>th</sup> Street to Dyckman Street, between Harlem River Drive and Amsterdam Avenue, this area remained only sparsely populated with scattered farms and private estates well into the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> By 1867, New York City had already begun to assemble pieces of the park, with its open vistas of the Harlem River, and magnificent cliffs and outcroppings of Manhattan's native stones, in order to permanently save this natural asset for the posterity of the city.<sup>15</sup> Assembled between 1867 and 1960, the majority of the park was acquired through condemnation proceedings from 1895 to 1901. In 1872, the completion of the water tower of the Croton Aqueduct system became one of Manhattan's most picturesque landmarks. This structure added a manmade element to this otherwise all-natural resource.<sup>16</sup> In this way, Highbridge Park is significant both as an incomparable natural resource for the Central section and as an area reflective of the historic layering of land use that is typical within the Central part of the Harlem River Study Area.

*\*Maher Circle and John Hooper Fountain*

*West 155<sup>th</sup> Street and Macomb's Dam Bridge*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1894*

*Architect: N/A*

*Landmark Status: New York City Landmark (1992)*

A survivor amid the construction of the Harlem River Drive is Maher Circle, which is located at the southwest end of the West 155<sup>th</sup> Street viaduct and is now part of the landmarked Macomb's Dam Bridge. This small paved island is home to the John Hooper Fountain, installed in 1894 at the bequest of Mr. Hooper, a civic-minded businessman, who, upon his death, donated \$10,000 to the independent cities of Brooklyn and Manhattan, for the creation of fountains.<sup>17</sup> His special request was that the fountains be designed to refresh all -- humans, horses, dogs and cats alike.<sup>18</sup> What remains today of this granite fountain is the large round horse trough, a carved pedestal drinking fountain, and a base flanked by two small basins. The base, according to New York Parks and Recreation archives, once supported an ionic column with a glass globe and weathervane.<sup>19</sup>

*Harlem River Speedway*

*Harlem River, between 160<sup>th</sup> Street and Dyckman Avenue*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1898*

*Architect: N/A*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The evolution of the historic Harlem River Speedway, from an exclusive recreational resource, through years of disrepair, to an important part of the Manhattan Greenway, is indicative of the disparate land

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uses common within the Central area. Originally constructed in 1898, the Harlem River Speedway was quoted in a local journal as “a unique use of a remarkably picturesque site.”<sup>20</sup> Running between 160<sup>th</sup> Street and Dyckman Avenue along the Harlem River in Manhattan, the Speedway opened as a carriage path and walkway along which New York’s elite could proudly display both themselves and their horses.<sup>21</sup> The Harlem River Speedway provided opportunities for horse racing, and enjoyment of expansive views of the Harlem River and rowing competitions. Existing passageways remain that led pedestrians safely to the speedway, which was difficult and dangerous to cross.<sup>22</sup>

The desire for paved roads eventually surpassed the need for a recreational speedway in New York City. As a result, major portions of the speedway were paved over for automobile traffic in the 1920s, and remaining portions fell into disrepair.<sup>23</sup> In 1938, the City of New York and Robert Moses announced plans to construct the Harlem River Drive. This major roadway, in accordance with prewar idealism regarding the benefits of highways in urban areas, was expected to “accomplish the clearing up of the existing unsightly and badly planned condition along the whole west bank of the Harlem River, making this river front property an orderly, beautiful area.”<sup>24</sup> Over sixty-years after the implementation of Robert Moses’ plans for the area, we would use his very words to define what is there now. The ‘unsightly badly planned conditions’ the Commissioner referred to back in 1938, took different shapes. The current character of the river front properties, cut by asphalt paved highways and many bridges and overpasses constantly animated by automobile traffic, seems far from our contemporary concept of beautiful area.

In 1993, Mayor Giuliani implemented a Greenway Plan for the City of New York, which called for the development of a 350-mile network of greenways through all five boroughs. This included a continuous ring around the island of Manhattan, known as the Manhattan Greenway Project.<sup>25</sup> The rehabilitation of the two-mile stretch of the former pedestrian promenade was the first phase completed of this joint City/State effort.<sup>26</sup> Much of the historic fabric was retained, while the memories of lost artifacts were also referenced in the design of new iron railings. The project furthermore reintroduces historic views of the High Bridge, as well as the Alexander Hamilton and Washington Bridges, which has previously been inaccessible during the years of decay.<sup>27</sup> The Manhattan Greenway returned a section of the Harlem River Speedway to the Central area and incorporated this historic recreational resource into the Greenway’s waterfront promenade.

#### *Macomb’s Dam Park and Fountain*

*East 161<sup>st</sup> and Macomb’s Dam Bridge, Bronx*

*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1899 (Park) 1936 (Fountain)*

*Architect of Park: N/A, Architect of Fountain: Martin Schenck and Arthur V. Waldregon*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

Macomb’s Dam Park is a testament to the idea that recreation is beneficial to the well-being of New York City residents. This is clearly indicated in the Department of Parks Annual Statement of 1914, where it says children were “drawn to these playgrounds where they were able to give full vent to their excess of feelings, and enjoy to the fullest extent those kinds of exercise which were conducive to their well-being both mentally and physically.”<sup>28</sup> Opened in 1899, just below East 161st Street in a typically industrial area of the Bronx, Macomb’s Dam Park was named for the Macomb family who operated a dam and a mill on the site in the early nineteenth century.

Many recreational pursuits were satisfied at its extensive facilities, which included a quarter-mile track, baseball fields, tennis courts, comfort stations, and a playground. The building of Yankee Stadium in 1923 only enhanced the appeal of the park. In 1936, the Macomb’s Dam Fountain, designed by Martin Schenck and Arthur V. Waldregon, was installed. Boasting a “large granite basin ornamented with carved limestone dolphins and a lion’s head.” The fountain, and its location within Macomb’s Dam Park, is a tribute to the continuing importance New Yorkers have placed on the recreational opportunities along the Harlem River.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Roberto Clemente State Park*

*West 176<sup>th</sup> Street to 180<sup>th</sup> Street, between the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River*

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*Block/Lot: N/A*

*1973*

*Architect: M. Paul Friedberg*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Educational Element*

Manmade recreational opportunities in the Central area continued to be created well into the twentieth century, even as uses associated with industry, transportation and infrastructure were simultaneously growing in this section. Opened in 1973, Roberto Clemente State Park is currently one of two State Parks located in New York City. Originally the “Harlem River State Park,” it was renamed in 1974 after the first Latino-American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.<sup>30</sup> Stretching from West 176th Street to West 180th Street between the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River, the original master plan for this park called for a mile-long stretch of open space that would incorporate a housing development in conjunction with public recreational facilities.<sup>31</sup> The landscape architect for the park, M. Paul Friedberg, was lauded in contemporary architectural periodicals for the urban landscape surrounding the Harlem River Park Tower apartments (1975), which utilized his trademark multi-level planes and amphitheater seats.<sup>32</sup> Sports fields, a swimming pool, and other recreational facilities occupy the twenty-five acre site north of the plaza.<sup>33</sup> All of the components take advantage of expansive views of the Harlem River, making Roberto Clemente State Park a significant recreational resource.

### **High-Density Housing Developments:**

*The Dyckman Houses*

*Dyckman Avenue and 204<sup>th</sup> Street, Inwood*

*Block/Lot: 2216/1*

*1951*

*Architect: William F. Ballard*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The Dyckman Houses is the first of three non-subsidized high-density housing developments in the Central area. Completed in 1951, this housing project was specifically designed for returning veterans after World War II. The non-subsidized housing rents covered the costs of the building and provided a small property tax break for the occupants. Seven residential buildings, each of which is fourteen-stories high, house 2,580 residents in 1,167 apartments. Designed by William F. Ballard, the project expresses the “tower in the park” ideal through its “slab” style and Beaux-Arts approach to axial orientation. The corner windows at the Dyckman Houses were a unique feature to public housing projects during this era and were most likely incorporated to emphasize the views across the river to the Bronx.

*The Colonial Park (Ralph Rangel Houses)*

*155<sup>th</sup> Street and Harlem River Drive, East Harlem*

*Block/Lot: 2106/320*

*1951*

*Architect: Whittlesey, Prince, Reiley*

*Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The conception of Colonial Park reflected European ideology in that the approach of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to social housing incorporated recreational as well as educational uses: green space, playgrounds and an elementary school are located on the site. Later renamed the Ralph Rangel Houses, the buildings at Colonial Park were completed in 1951. Although it is a high-density housing development, this complex was the second of three non-subsidized constructions in the Central section that were designed for middle-income veterans in need of housing after World War II. The Rangel Houses include eight, fourteen-story buildings, which together provide 984 apartments to 2,242 residents. The architectural firm of Whittlesey, Prince, Reiley designed this project according to the cruciform style, which further maximized light and ventilation. The bottom floors of the Rangel Houses were designed for commercial use, a unique concept for public housing of this era.

*Marble Hill Houses*

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*Broadway, West 225th Street, Exterior Street, and West 230th Street**Block/Lot: 2215/116**1952**Architect: John Ambrose Thompson**Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The Marble Hill Houses were completed in 1952 at the height of high-density housing development in New York City. The project is the third example of non-subsidized public housing in the Central section. The maximum income for applicants was initially \$4,900 a year and preference was given to veterans of World War II. The site includes eleven, fourteen, and fifteen-story buildings. John Ambrose Thompson's "slab" design of Marble Hill Houses was the most cost-efficient building type compared to the "cruciform" or "garden apartment" styles also popular in this era. The Marble Hill Houses represent the third wave of residential development in that community, following the development of single-family homes and later the apartment houses.

*The Highbridge Houses**165<sup>th</sup> Street, Ogden Avenue, University Avenue, and Sedgewick Avenue, Bronx Terminal Market**Block/Lot: 2527/32**1954**Architect: John C. Peterkin**Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

Although constructed and managed by NYCHA, the Highbridge Houses is a federally funded high-density housing development in the Central area. The site is located uphill from the Bronx Terminal Market. Completed in 1954, John C. Peterkin designed the Highbridge Houses in the slab style. Derived from European housing design, the axial orientation of the buildings maximizes green space. The site plan includes six buildings, at thirteen or fourteen-stories, which together include 699 apartments for 1,728 residents.

*Polo Grounds Towers**Frederick Douglass Boulevard, West 155th Street, and Harlem River Drive, East Harlem**Block/Lot: 2106/3**1968**Architect: Ballard & Todd Associates**Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

The site of the Polo Grounds Towers is culturally significant to the inhabitants of New York City in that the location served legendary athletic facilities. The stadium, which served the original Polo Grounds, was later used by the Manhattan Athletic Club, the New York Giants and the Yankees. The Towers were built on a 15.5 acre site by Ballard & Todd Associates, adjacent to the Rangel Houses, in 1968. The federally funded high-density housing development includes four thirty-story buildings in the "cruciform" style that together provide 1,616 apartments for 4,207 residents. Celebrated by the Municipal Art Society in the exhibition entitled, "New New York 3: Small Civic Works", designs approved by NYCHA in 2000 for a community center feature athletic and educational facilities that provide internet and computer access to residents of the Polo Grounds Towers and the Rangel Houses.

*Harlem River Park Towers**Roberto Clemente Park State Park**West 176<sup>th</sup> Street to 180<sup>th</sup> Street, between the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River**Block/Lot: 2882**1975**Architect: Davis, Brody Associates**Recommended Acknowledgement: Appropriate Signage*

Designed by the firm of Davis, Brody and Associates and completed in 1975, the Harlem River Park Towers were part of a plan to develop the first New York State Park in New York City. This Mitchell-Lama

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project was a collaboration between New York State's Urban Development Corporation and the City of New York. The architects' program integrated social idealism into urban design during a period of decreasing federal involvement in high-density housing development. In spite of these efforts, the project failed to meet expectations. Three years after the two towers were completed, residents in the 1,600-unit complex attempted a rent strike due to their poor living conditions. Currently, the forty-four and forty-two-story towers are in a state of physical disrepair and social instability.

### **Challenges in the Area**

There are multiple issues facing preservationists in determining the significance of and threats to historic character. Preservation issues in the Central section include existing zoning, access to the waterfront, conservation and maintenance of historic fabric, and pollution and accountability. It is the goal of this project to identify the role of preservation in mitigating these issues, conduct research into the root causes, and make useful recommendations to the communities addressed.

The issues affecting the Central portion of the Harlem River study area are further described below. Aside from zoning they are categorized in terms of use and divided into four corresponding groups: first, the issues within the area's transportation and infrastructure resources are described; second, those specific to industrial resources are explained; third, the issues pertaining to recreational areas; lastly, issues in high-density housing developments are discussed.

Prior to breaking down the issues associated with each type of infrastructure, it can be said that the issue of zoning encompasses the area as a whole. The existing zoning is a limiting factor for any development that could contribute to the revitalization and preservation of the area. Zoning of the lots along the river is primarily M1-1, M2-1, M3-1, and R7-1, which denote light to heavy manufacturing and medium-density apartment houses.<sup>34</sup> The problem is that the intensity and scale of industrial activity in the area has been reduced in the forty years since the last major zoning review. The current zoning is therefore limiting possibilities for redevelopment.

#### **Issues Associated with Transportation and Infrastructure:**

Transportation corridors such as the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River Drive are vital to the function of New York City and are a valuable asset to commuters, though they do pose challenges to the communities through which they pass. The course of the railroads along the Bronx shore poses similar problems, generally impeding waterfront access, creating unused pockets of land, poorly maintained historic resources, noise and air pollution, and damage caused by structural vibration.

In contrast, the bridges that span the Harlem River do not function as effectively in limiting access to the waterfront; however, they do impose barriers to pedestrian navigation along the river's north-south axis and have been contentious subjects for waterborne activities. More commonly, they are the victims of insensitive retrofitting and maintenance projects, which can degrade their historic and aesthetic attributes. In some cases, their importance for the region's history has been sacrificed to campaigns modernizing New York City's sprawling infrastructure. For many of the bridges, pedestrian access is inadequate, including the High Bridge, which once carried visitors across the engineering feat that was the revolutionary Croton Aqueduct.

#### *Major Deegan Expressway*

The Major Deegan Expressway today poses a paradox: its conflicting performance on a local versus regional scale. While the expressway functions as an essential artery between the Southern tip of the

Bronx and northern New York State and beyond, it severs the urban fabric at the local neighborhood level.<sup>35</sup> The Major Deegan Expressway divides the land along the Bronx shore between highly populated residential and desolate industrial zones. Numerous off-ramps lead to the formation of transitional areas that are hard to incorporate into the general fabric of the city; these in-between spaces become pockets of empty land and neglected properties. Massive structural elements, wide lanes, intense traffic, and high curbs come between the local population and the underutilized riverfront.

The expressway represents a major challenge in our study area in that it is necessary to the region's commercial economy, but is also a local barrier, a source of noise and air pollution, and an instigator of structural vibration from its intense and heavy motor vehicle traffic.

#### *Harlem River Drive (Speedway)*

The Harlem River Drive is another example of a major urban thoroughfare hindering pedestrian access along the Harlem River. Currently, the Manhattan Greenway between 163<sup>rd</sup> and Dyckman Streets takes advantage of the former 1.5 mile-long promenade that once graced the Harlem River Speedway, but it is seldom accessible along the length of the highway. The location of this major thoroughfare along a large portion of waterfront land precludes possibilities for future water-related development, such as promenades and facilities for boating. As such, the Harlem River Drive is a significant determinant of the nature of the waterfront relationship with inland areas.

#### *Railroads*

Most of the freight activity on the railroads today is driven by New York City Department of Sanitation, whose facilities occupy large tracts of waterfront acreage in the South Bronx. The placement of the tracks along the river's edge plays a substantial role in the industrial character of the area. It also discloses the principle behind the decisions of those responsible for its configuration: the area and the tracks were laid out according to the most efficient method for commercial success and economic viability. This results in another obstacle to waterfront access. At-grade crossings would only allow entry to the thin strip between the tracks and the water, which has seen little in the way of development since its initial construction.

#### *Harlem River Bridges*

One of the major issues facing the bridges on the Harlem River is the practical need to maintain them as viable infrastructure. The condition of some of the historic structures has been compromised in response to this demand. It is imperative that improvement projects are sensitive to the historic fabric in their efforts to improve and retrofit these bridges. Though most of the Central bridges are landmarked by the City (except the Alexander Hamilton) and therefore subject to regulation by the Landmarks Commission, it is still possible that historically insensitive or destructive projects can be undertaken in the name of public progress, especially on a citywide scale. A balance must be found between the need for adequate infrastructure and the protection of historic structures.

A 2002 citywide survey conducted by the Department of Transportation (DOT) revealed that the Harlem River swing bridges are in need of work. Macomb's Dam Bridge is slated to receive major rehabilitation of its super- and substructure elements, as well as a complete replacement of the road deck in order to improve its rating of "poor" in the 2002 New York City Bridges and Tunnels Annual Condition Report. The construction, begun in 1999 and scheduled for completion in 2004, is estimated to cost \$145 million. A seismic retrofit project of the bridge and viaduct, scheduled for 2012-2013, is estimated at \$36 million.<sup>36</sup> In the case of movable bridges, improvement projects often involve mechanical and electrical systems rather than structural deficiencies. From 1989-2002 the University Heights Bridge was fitted with a new electrical and mechanical control system, as part of a \$35 million reconstruction project undertaken by the New York State Department of Transportation.<sup>37</sup>

Often, as a result of projects intended to update their use, the bridges' aesthetic details become inconspicuous or lost. Although open to pedestrians, the Washington Bridge's fine details are obscured to

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close observers by a chain link fence that was imposed over the original iron railings. Though its condition rating in the 2002 Condition Report is “good” and no improvement projects are currently planned<sup>38</sup>, the Washington Bridge could be significantly improved aesthetically so that the public can be aware of and enjoy its historic value. Indeed, lack of public awareness of the historic, cultural, technological, and aesthetic value of all the Harlem River Bridges makes them particularly susceptible to destructive change that could be better managed.

The last of the issues facing the Harlem River bridges is the loss of pedestrian access. All of the bridges except the Hamilton were originally designed to be accessible to travelers on foot. Over time, this use has diminished as the approaches and land-use on either side of the bridges become less people-friendly and more oriented towards vehicular traffic. This, in turn, erodes the cultural meaning of the bridges as urban structures connecting the portions of city that lie on either side of the Harlem River.

### *The High Bridge*

The Roman Aqueduct-styled High Bridge, which boasts a pedestrian oriented promenade with spectacular views up and down the river, also faces access-related issues as it is currently closed to the public.

The High Bridge has a number of conservation issues, beginning with the original cast iron water main located inside the bridge. There is presently a great deal of deterioration of the pipe itself. But the main concerns here are the rusted bearings, which are located on the brackets supporting the pipe. The original function of these bearings was to allow for any horizontal differential movement – due to temperature-related expansion and contraction – of the pipe that it supports. But the fact that these bearings are rusted to the adjoining brackets inhibits this differential movement, which, because the brackets are affixed to the masonry floor inside the bridge, poses a threat to the structural integrity of the bridge as a whole.

Another conservation issue involves gatehouse structures at either end of the bridge. The roofs and existing parapet walls are in poor condition and need to be restored. As funds become available, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation will install new roofs and rain leaders and stabilize the parapet walls. The Manhattan side will require additional shoring for the concrete and brick ceiling/roof, which has a severe crack.<sup>39</sup> Conservation measures also need to be taken to address the vandalization of these structures, along with a number of other historic structures gracing Highbridge Park including the historic passageway in Highbridge Park that once led to the Harlem River Speedway.

The High Bridge also faces design issues regarding the pedestrian rail on top of the bridge. The height of the current, original wrought iron rail does not meet the current DOT requirements, so it needs to be replaced. Currently, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation is somewhat looking into this issue of design in reference to respecting the original while additionally addressing safety concerns.<sup>40</sup>

### *Issues in Industrial Sites and Structures*

The following discussion pertains to issues related to conservation of the historic fabric and character of sites in the study area that are typically industrial, manufacturing, or exclusively maritime in nature. These problems are not necessarily unique to the areas discussed; however, the specifics of each site and their place in the hierarchy of significance inform the recommendations made in the following sections.

### *Development Rights and Ownership*

For many of the sites located in the study area, the common denominator is municipal participation in the construction or continued operation of the resource. In most of these situations, the needs and decisions of the city agency involved would take precedence over calls to conserve. These city agencies include the Department of Sanitation, the Department of General Services, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

Currently, expansions to programs by the relevant city agencies may take priority over saving the historic fabric located at a site. For example, the MTA 207<sup>th</sup> St. Maintenance Yard is presently capable of servicing a large number of subway trains. If a new line was introduced to the region, or more trains added to the existing service, the need for larger, more advanced facilities would potentially compete with the need to preserve the legacy of historic transportation infrastructure that helps define this part of Inwood.

If new development is spurred by renewed economic activity or changes to zoning designations, then pressure to develop the underutilized properties will be greater. While it is an option for city agencies to sell their property rights or adopt easements, it is unlikely. The result of such development could be a reduction in the amount of extant built fabric dating to the first waves of public investment in the area. For example, the land surrounding the Manhattan Incinerator plant at 215<sup>th</sup> Street may soon be desirable or integral to plans for community based park and greenway systems. It is difficult to qualify the importance of the now defunct plant when popular alternatives for use exist; likewise, there is a dearth of ideas for reusing a site with this specific program.

Likewise, on property owned by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection in Marble Hill, under-built fabric (of a contemporary character) was eliminated to accommodate new commercial uses hailed by Bronx politicians and residents alike. The new structures overwhelm the historic connections to the waterfront and old Spuyten Duyvil Creek that existed on the site before. However, the development of the shopping center has brought renewed economic activity and real estate speculation to the community. These uses are in keeping with the speculative nature of early twentieth century development in Marble Hill, during which construction of the commercial strip along the west side of Broadway between West 225<sup>th</sup> St. and West 228<sup>th</sup> St. responded to the completion of the I.R.T. and an influx of new residents.

Finally, as resources available to the city and its departments become scarce, with looming budget cuts and growing constituencies, the maximization of assets and property will become increasingly important. The potential response could encompass changes to use or scope that are incompatible with existing structures and/or programs. Additionally, if the structures and sites become available to new development, the issue of contaminated sites and public safety/welfare becomes significant. Adaptive reuse can only work if the new program can be reconciled with the environmental conditions particular to a site. In the most obvious example, the lots controlled by Consolidated Edison (ConEd) at the edge of Sherman's Creek remain saturated with toxins and carcinogens. Plans to establish publicly accessible greenways and waterfront must consider the present state of the land, and factor in these conditions when attempting to reprogram the site. It may be an unfortunate consequence that the lasting legacy of a meaningful industrial site is not its built fabric, but its chemical residues.

### **Issues in Recreation**

There is an abundance of recreational opportunities serving both natives and visitors throughout the Central section of the Harlem River Study Area. As previously discussed, one of the major issues affecting these resources is the fact that physical access to these parks and waterfront is currently limited by transportation infrastructure that has run along the shorelines of the Harlem River since the middle of the nineteenth century. The train tracks of the historic Harlem River Line (MetroNorth) and the twentieth century thoroughfares of the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River Drive present obstacles to realizing the full potential of existing recreation opportunities – particularly along the water's edge. As limited access discourages use, these physical barriers promote apathy for these precious resources, resulting in the defacement of public property, less routine maintenance, and the perception of these locations as unsafe.

#### *Parks*

Roberto Clemente State Park serves as the largest expanse of uninterrupted open space along the Bronx side of the Harlem River. It offers relief from the chain link fencing and private ownership of waterfront lands in the study area, but is physically separated from inland areas by both the Major Deegan

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Expressway and MetroNorth rail lines. With only two pedestrian passageways to take visitors over these major transportation corridors, safely reaching this recreational resource becomes an additional issue. During non-summer months, when the park around the Harlem River Park Towers is less populated, the aforementioned apathy manifests itself in the throwing of garbage and refuse from the apartments above, giving the plaza an unsavory reputation during most of the calendar year.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, access is an important issue concerning the Manhattan Greenway at the historic Harlem River Speedway pedestrian promenade, which is physically severed from the community by the Harlem River Drive. Currently, only two entrances, one at either end of the Greenway, serve as limited access along the entire two-mile stretch of this park. Limited access has made it difficult for pedestrians to take advantage of this newly rehabilitated recreational resource.

General apathy has resulted in further deterioration of nearby infrastructure within Highbridge Park. Vandalism of historic remnants, like the archway and grand stairway that formerly led to a subterranean passageway just south of the Washington Bridge, is the result of severe neglect. Within the park itself, overgrown vegetation and derelict elements including benches, railings, and stairs add to the perception of this area as insignificant and irrelevant, and perpetuate a cycle of abandonment and disrepair. The situation here exists in contrast to the corresponding area on the Bronx side of the waterfront, beneath the High Bridge, where a recently restored staircase leading to the shoreline and the Bronx section of Highbridge Park are maintained by the attendant community.

Furthermore, the issue of access to the existing recreational areas in the Central section of the study area is one of limited connections between the shoreline and the inland communities these resources are meant to serve. While the 1993 Manhattan Greenway plan attempted to make physical connections between New York's parks and the neighboring communities, this vision is not yet realized. The revitalization of the historic, 1.5 mile-long Harlem River Speedway pedestrian path is hindered by obstacles to the completion of the Greenway plan between Dyckman and West 201st Streets in Inwood. In the lower Inwood area in particular, the waterfront is difficult to access due to the numerous owners of lots along the river (including ConEd, the NYC Transit Authority and the Department of Sanitation), with much of the area currently fenced off and inaccessible to the public.<sup>42</sup> Zoned for industrial use, fenced off, and hidden from public view, the public perception is that these areas are dangerous and inhospitable; however, this is not necessarily the case, as many of the lots serve simply as transportation depots or warehouse parking. Perhaps as the Central area identity is reinforced as a historic layering of uses – industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational – a sense of pride and increased enjoyment will ensue.

#### *Water-related Activities*

Few structures physically remain that depict the historic use of the Harlem River as a center for rowing at the turn of the nineteenth century. The boating structures and docks that currently exist near Sherman's Creek, although accurate in their location, are contemporary structures and are aesthetically different from those of the earlier period. These boating structures also pose environmental problems in an already polluted riverfront environment. In contrast, the New York Restoration Project boathouse, by architect Robert Stern, will reintroduce the memory of rowing along this portion of the Harlem River. Deciding the best way to reference this era in the history of the region, and how to depict it, are important aspects in the interpretation of recreational history within Harlem River Study Area.

#### **Issues in High-density Housing Developments**

High-density housing developments in the Central area are successful in that they provide large quantities of affordable units, decent living conditions and, for the most part, well maintained facilities. In spite of New York City's success with its housing programs – relative to other major U.S. cities– the issues that plague these developments are detrimental to their future stability and continuing functionality.

The biggest challenge that NYCHA faces in maintaining and improving the public housing projects within the study area is that of funding. As the amount of federal funding NYCHA receives decreases, their capability to maintain and conserve the buildings suffers.

Another challenge associated with high-density housing in the Central area includes a number of problems caused by close proximity to either the Harlem River Drive or the Major Deegan Expressway. Resulting from the automobile pollution released from these major thoroughfares is the high asthma rate within these developments and the increased need for conservation work on the buildings themselves. These two transportation arteries also adversely affect access to the waterfront: with the exception of the Harlem River Park Towers, the five remaining high-density housing developments have been cut off from both the waterfront and the nearby parks. The Department of City Planning is currently addressing this access-related issue with the Greenway Plan, which provides connections from the residential buildings to the waterfront and parks.

#### *Harlem River Park Towers*

The principles of the “tower in the park” theory – a major concept behind high-density housing development – were included in this design; a large amount of green space allows for greater ventilation and provides an open outdoor area for the residents to enjoy. Although an in-depth analysis of the housing in the Central section would be required to verify this, there are consequences of having a large span of open space in uncontrolled and unmonitored areas surrounding these developments, an issue in any area with a wide expanse of land. Harlem River Park Towers, located in Roberto Clemente State Park, has recently had problems with security and safety. In addition to vandalism, which compromises the integrity of the buildings, the residents feel unsafe due to the lack of security, instilling “fears that diapers, glass bottles and home appliances flying from the screen-less windows will strike them.”<sup>43</sup> Recently, the tenants have dealt with shootouts, flying bullets, drug dealers, and gangs, complicating the already tenuous management situation there.

One of the major problems concerning the Harlem River Park Towers is the neglect and lack of maintenance it has suffered at the hands of its private management company. As early as 1979 (four years after its completion), residents complained about the deteriorating living conditions and unresponsiveness of the owners. Many apartments are vacant and residents have cited various problems, including floods, rats, fires, and dog feces in the hallway.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Marble Hill Houses*

Recently, public housing in the city has also faced structural and maintenance problems due to a lack of funding. Severe cuts in Federal aid have resulted in the deferment of major capital repairs like the spalling problems at the Marble Hill Houses. Until things can be adequately addressed or replaced, any funding received is applied towards essentials such as heating, aging plumbing, and wiring. Due to these structural safety issues, the vacancy rate in the developments is increasing. Authorities have considered turning the buildings over to private managers and charging higher rents, increasing the number of working-class tenants, and thereby turning away the people who really need affordable and subsidized housing.<sup>45</sup>

The City’s involvement in addressing the needs of the public housing projects has been largely positive in reference to developments managed by NYCHA. The structural integrity of the buildings has been maintained and the agencies recent approval of innovative design proposals for the community center between the Ralph Rangel Houses and the Polo Grounds Towers indicates that they recognize the changing needs of the communities they are charged to serve.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are not grouped by use, but rather in terms of their geographical location. This shift in organization is due to the interrelationship of the proposals and the aforementioned uses. For instance, the High Bridge was described in the transportation and infrastructure section of our plan; however, the recommendation suggests its future function as a key component to the recreational resources in the Central section. In addition, the Harlem River Historic Walk links the layering of development we previously cited; the walk connects the industrial, residential, and recreational sites to the historic transportation structures and infrastructure facilities in the Central area. This has been done in order to acknowledge and maintain the multiple uses and characteristics that have defined the river throughout history. The recommendations are as follows:

### **Improved Access to Recreation over Existing Transportation Infrastructure**

When the public cannot access significant historic resources, the awareness of these cultural assets quickly declines. As a result of this indifference toward the historic resources, the Central area is faced with various challenges including vandalism, neglect, and deterioration. Currently, transportation corridors that run along the Harlem River shorelines on both the Manhattan and Bronx sides of the area sever access to waterfront resources from inland communities. Safe pedestrian over and underpasses are extremely limited over the Major Deegan Expressway, Harlem River Drive, and Metro North train tracks. Accessibility to existing recreational areas within the Central section must be improved in order to increase knowledge and contact with these important sites.

In recent years, several local and regional organizations have proposed plans to improve safe pedestrian access to existing recreational and waterfront resources within the Central section of the Harlem River Study Area. The following two sets of recommendations summarize existing proposals with the goal of improving access to recreational sites both on the Manhattan and Bronx sides of the Harlem River.

#### *New York Restoration Project: Harlem River Esplanade<sup>46</sup>*

As part of their proposals for improving and expanding the existing greenway esplanade along the Harlem River, the New York Restoration Project (NYRP) has made several suggestions regarding the future improvement of pedestrian access to the existing greenway. In addition, the organization proposes other strategies for improving pedestrian safety in these areas. Recommendations by NYRP, which should be incorporated into this plan include:

- 155<sup>th</sup> Street Crossroads District: The 155<sup>th</sup> Street Crossroads District extends between Highbridge Park and the Harlem River. In this location, access from the Polo Grounds Towers and Rangel Houses to Highbridge Park and the river has been cut off by the Harlem River Drive. A goal of this project would be to reestablish access to the riverfront esplanade by means of a dedicated pedestrian walkway.
- Highbridge Park and Manhattan Greenway at the Historic Harlem River Greenway: The two-mile greenway currently running between West 155<sup>th</sup> and Dyckman Streets, parallel to Highbridge Park, is completely severed from the inland community by the Harlem River Drive. As a result, pedestrians and bikers have very few opportunities to safely cross from one side to the other. "Traffic calming" measures should be implemented along the Drive here, and new pedestrian links should physically be created to take people over or under the drive, where appropriate.
- Gateway District: According to the NYRP, the Gateway District encompasses the area of Swindler Cove Park at Sherman Creek, which is the site of the new Peter Jay Sharp boathouse designed by Robert Stern. This area is also bifurcated by the Harlem River Drive from the inland community. Means of improving pedestrian flow across the busy and perilous Harlem River Drive/Dyckman Street/Tenth Avenue intersection should be implemented.

*NYC Department of City Planning: Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Reach 6: Hudson and Harlem Rivers (1993)*

Reach 6 of the 1993 New York City Department of City Planning Comprehensive Waterfront Plan addresses a seven-mile area from the city line at Yonkers to the Hudson River to 153<sup>rd</sup> Street along the Harlem River. The reach generally includes all lands between the water's edge and the first public streets in Bronx Community Districts 4, 5, 7 and 8. We propose adopting the following recommendations for improved pedestrian safety and access to recreational resources within the Central section:

- Create an access bridge from West 225<sup>th</sup> Street down to the edge of the Harlem River.
- Create pedestrian access from the University Heights Bridge downwards to the edge of the Harlem River.
- Create new pedestrian links from adjoining communities at both the northern and southern ends of Roberto Clemente State Park, in addition to the two existing vehicular bridges in these areas. The first could extend from the Cedar Avenue playground at the end of West 179<sup>th</sup> Street, and the second could stretch from the end of the West 176<sup>th</sup> stepped street.
- Implement an extension of an existing pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway from the Highbridge community at West 161<sup>st</sup> Street to supplement an existing ramp to the north.

### **Harlem River Historic Walk**

A historic walk with guiding visual markers is proposed beginning at the Polo Grounds Towers at West 155<sup>th</sup> Street, continuing along the Manhattan Greenway at the historic Harlem River Speedway (between West 163<sup>rd</sup> Streets and Dyckman Avenue), and terminating at Sherman's Creek in Inwood. The objective of this walk is to recall the developmental history of the Central section of the study area, a dynamic and vibrant evolution that resulted in a layering of industrial, transportation, residential, and recreational uses along the edges of the Harlem River.

By beginning at the Polo Grounds Towers, the site of legendary athletic facilities including the polo grounds and the former stadium of the New York Giants (legendary baseball team) and now the site of a NYCHA housing project, the walking tour will begin with an element of the recent past - the story of public housing development within the Central section, predominant in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The Manhattan Greenway at the historic Harlem River Speedway will tell a story of its own; one of the height of boating and rowing activity for the region at the turn of the nineteenth century, when New York's elite gathered here to enjoy expansive views of the Harlem River. The history of transportation infrastructure in the Central area can be simultaneously expressed along the greenway, which offers views of the historic Harlem River Line train tracks across the river in the Bronx (1851), which run between the water and the Major Deegan Expressway (1960s). By culminating at the southern edge of Sherman's Creek, the walk will further tell the story of industrial development in the Central section, as this point along the shoreline is a clear expression of the layered nature of the area, with industrial development on the northern boundary, residential to the west, and recreation on the southern shore of the inlet itself.

The visual markers along this walkway should consist of small interpretive billboards at waist height (approximately 36 inches off the ground), which incorporate text and images referring to the various instances in the developmental history of the Central area. The billboards should be oriented such that readers are directed towards specific and significant view corridors. In some cases these may face outwards towards the Bronx and the Harlem River, as well as the historic bridges. In other instances, the view corridors might be oriented inwards towards transportation infrastructure and Manhattan-side development. At all points, historic photos of matching views should accompany text explaining the genesis of this land use within the Central section. Examples of similar land uses and items from similar time periods can be expressed through color-coded maps, which may also be incorporated into some of the billboards. Existing historical remnants should also be identified along the walk, including the arched stairway just north of the Washington Bridge, which once lead from the Harlem River Speedway to Highbridge Park above. In accordance with National Park Service guidelines for interpretive signs, the billboards should help each visitor connect with the development of the Central section of the Harlem River Study Area.

Although eventually intended to serve as a permanent lead-in to the Manhattan Greenway, the entry at West 155<sup>th</sup> Street to the south of the greenway currently offers only a weak connection. Similarly, although a waterfront connection has been proposed for the area north of Dyckman Street leading to

Sherman's Creek, the proposals have not yet been realized. While these crucial elements are finalized, implementation of the historic walk can begin along the two-mile stretch of the Manhattan Greenway between West 163<sup>rd</sup> and Dyckman Streets, which was recently rehabilitated. This step can comprise Phase One of this recommendation. Phase Two can establish permanent connections to the north and south of the greenway. A possibility for Phase Three would be to expand the interpretive billboards into other areas of the Central area, including additional housing projects, areas of the Bronx, or calling out archaeologically significant sites within Highbridge Park.

### **High-Density Housing:**

The biggest challenge that NYCHA faces in maintaining and improving the public housing projects within the study area is that of funding. As the amount of federal funding NYCHA receives decreases, their capability to maintain and conserve the buildings suffers. Although important to preservation issues, we feel that the topic of ways to increase federal funding is beyond this preservation plan. We would only recommend that NYCHA carefully allocates funds to consider important structural repairs that affect the buildings and the residents that occupy the apartments.

The four NYCHA public housing projects in the Central section currently have functioning community facilities. In 2002, NYCHA proposed plans to improve and reconstruct a majority of their community centers, including a community center between the Ralph Rengal Houses and the Polo Grounds Towers. The community center designs were recently exhibited at the Municipal Art Society's installation entitled, "New New York 3: Small Civic Works". The retrospective promoted innovative designs for low cost, municipal projects, which could include important amenities such as athletic and computer facilities. We recommend the continuation of community center redevelopment within our area. Not only would these centers provide a place for the residents to socialize but would serve as the home base for community meetings and involvement. The ideal end result from this increased community contact includes the creation of neighborhood watches to address security and safety issues and conservation and ecological awareness seminars to generate information about the local area.

### **Harlem River Bridges:**

The four landmarked bridges in the Central section of the study area (University Heights, Washington, High, and Macomb's Dam Bridges) are technically protected from demolition or destructive change. However, because they are City-owned structures, the Landmarks Commission is limited to an advisory role in reviewing proposals for the bridges and cannot regulate project goals or methods. It is therefore important to identify ways in which to protect the bridges along the Harlem River from projects that assume the bridges to be obsolete or unneeded, and thereby unworthy of sensitive preservation effort. Many of these recommendations can be applied to other significant bridges, especially the swing spans, in the other sections of the Harlem River Study Area.

One way to increase the awareness level of these important bridges would be through education and increased public knowledge. The most potent form of education in the case of the bridges is enhancing the public's immediate and daily experience of them. As busy pedestrian and vehicular bridges (with the exception of High Bridge), these landmarks have the potential to attract the admiration of all who use them. The following recommendations will bring these bridges the attention they deserve:

- Improve pedestrian walkways; extremely close proximity to vehicular traffic is stressful and non-conducive to the contemplation or appreciation of the bridge.
- Install markers legible to pedestrians; educational signs with historic photos of the bridge and river could be erected at both ends of the bridge for pedestrians to read.
- Install markers legible to motorists; attractive larger signs at each entrance onto the bridge could tell the name and date of the bridge. Some markers already exist and could be restored to improve visibility.
- Install a string of lights along the structural members of the bridges, including the trusses and arches, in order to emphasize the unique profile of each bridge.

- Create a program of informational tours, such as a ferry route (see below under Highbridge Park). The more exposure and attention the bridges garner, the more likely the public will defend and protect them.

The Harlem River bridges are susceptible to improvement projects that overlook their historic and aesthetic importance. As public infrastructure, the bridges must first serve traffic needs. However, service improvements can be compatible with preservation if sensitive and practical guidelines are adhered to. Recommendations for improvement and maintenance projects are as follows:

- Materials should not be replaced unless absolutely necessary; replacement materials should be compatible with original pieces.
- The original truss patterns, visible connection methods (pinning or riveting), and other structural members that give each bridge character should be maintained.
- Necessary reinforcement of structural members should be visually unobtrusive.
- Finish details, such as railings & finials, especially at pedestrian level, should be maintained.
- Secondary structures such as approach towers or other human-use structures should be maintained.
- Original coloration of steel, masonry, and other materials should be maintained.

Proper regular maintenance is the most vital way of protecting the bridges. Retaining and preserving the aesthetic significance of the bridges influences the public perception of them as historic and cultural assets.

Because the bridges are part of an historic system of roadways connecting Manhattan and the Bronx, the City may have access to public resources that could help fund their preservation. The City may have a chance at securing TEA-21 funds from New York's Transportation Enhancement fund, supplied by the Federal Government. These funds are available for surface transportation enhancement projects that include some of the following activities: provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, historic preservation, and the rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, and facilities<sup>47</sup> These eligible activities clearly include the recommendations outlined above, and could provide much needed funds under TEA-21 in order to maintain and restore the bridges as public assets. Refer to the appendix for overall funding options.

#### *Case Study: Design Recommendations for Railings on the Washington Bridge*

Currently, there is a chain-link fence that serves as the railing for the Washington Bridge. Although this may meet code requirements, it seriously hinders pedestrians from experiencing the view historically enjoyed from this landmark. The original iron railings still remain, but the present fence has obscured their fine ornamental detail. A better alternative that still meets code requirements is needed; the following are design recommendations for such an alternative:

- Restore visibility of river and viewscales.
- Restore visibility of finish details, including original iron railings.
- Use materials more visually compatible with extant originals that reflect a sensitivity to and respect for the historic structure.
- New railings should coexist with the old ones; replacement of railings is not acceptable.

Improving the railing of the Washington Bridge will help restore the pedestrian and motorist experience on it, thereby retaining it as a public asset in cultural and aesthetic terms and not merely in practical use.

#### **Highbridge and Highbridge Park**

Generally, the recommendations described below share common goals: the establishment of an open space network linking the Harlem River shoreline with Highbridge Park and the High Bridge, as well as the re-creation of promenades and access points which, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, were packed with citizens of New York and its environs. In addition, the recommendations include the

implementation of activities that will attract the public to the park and promote community awareness of the park's historic structures and recreational potential.

### *High Bridge*

The recommendations for High Bridge, the Roman-style aqueduct bridge that carried the Croton Aqueduct across the Harlem River, address access, design, and conservation issues. First, it is recommended that the historic pedestrian promenade atop the High Bridge be reopened to the public. Recently, progress has been made to re-open and re-use High Bridge as a recreational resource for New York. In 2002, the Department of Transportation (DOT) pledged \$1 million to fund an in-depth inspection of the current state of the High Bridge in order to assess possible plans to reopen High Bridge for recreational use. The High Bridge Coalition hosted a one-day conference in June of 2002 to encourage discussions and plans for reuse of the bridge. In January of 2003, \$2 million in federal transportation grants from the State of New York was dedicated to help develop access to the Manhattan entrance of the High Bridge. As recently as October 2003, funds have been allocated to make additional improvements on both sides of the bridge. Although the New York City Parks Department and the New York Restoration Project are continuing with these efforts, there needs to be continuous follow-up with both organizations to ensure the opening of High Bridge. The second recommendation deals with the pedestrian rail on the promenade. A new design for the rail is needed due to the inadequate height of the current pedestrian rail, which does not comply with the city's building code standards for public safety. This issue involves the compliance with current building code specifications and the consideration for the original design intent of the ornate, distinctive, wrought iron rail. The final recommendations involve conservation measures, specifically addressing the deterioration of the water pipe inside the High Bridge, the rusted bearings at the brackets inside the bridge, and the cleaning of vandalized gate structures and stairwells at either end of the bridge. Conservation and maintenance of historic structures is difficult to address in that the available public funds for the maintenance of Highbridge Park has not been contributed to this historic structure but rather the park and access to the bridge itself.

### *Highbridge Park*

We propose designating Highbridge Park a New York City Scenic Landmark in conjunction with the creation of a master plan for overall improvements to the park that would not detract from its historic layered character. The Landmark Preservation Commission would have final review over significant items of infrastructure in the park that need to be protected, such as the 184<sup>th</sup> Street Overlook, the nineteenth century pumping station, and original elements of landscaping.

In addition, we propose designating four individual New York City landmarks within the park. These include both historic stairwells along the High Bridge on the Bronx and Manhattan sides of the Harlem River, dating from at least 1891 and 1893, respectively. The Manhattan stairwell includes an historic arch dating from at least 1913. The other two proposed designations are the two gatehouses on either side of High Bridge, which we believe to date from 1891, according to a Sanborn map of the area.

Additional recommendations for Highbridge Park involve issues of access, as well as the need for education and awareness within the community. In order to improve access to and from the waterfront and greenway, traffic mitigation measures need to be implemented on the Manhattan side of the Harlem River. The New York Restoration Project (NYPR), a community group funded by Bette Midler, is currently advocating a "traffic calming" strategy in its Upper Harlem/Harlem River Waterfront Comprehensive Plan. Like NYPR, this plan also recommends that access be provided to the entire length of the historic stairwell on the Bronx side of the Park, down the steep incline that terminates at the Harlem River. The chain link fence currently preventing access at that location should be removed. The final recommendation of this plan is to promote school and community programs aimed at education and awareness; such initiatives are currently being implemented as part of NYRP's program to revitalize Highbridge Park.

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A feasibility study should be undertaken to determine the best locations for opening new access points to Highbridge Park and the Harlem River Speedway. Implementing new access points should take into account the proximity and the accessibility to educational institutions. Such measures are proposed in order to facilitate the development of educational programs that will utilize the park as a learning resource for ecology, biology, history, geography, etc.

Along with new access points, a series of activities including tours, boating, hiking and rappelling are proposed in order to restore the livelihood of the park. Highbridge Park was a popular destination point in the nineteenth-century; by creating new activities and by attracting newcomers, the park can once again be an important recreational resource. New structures, such as educational facilities, a restaurant, an amphitheater and the Harlem River Museum, could be designed according to a national design competition (see design recommendations that follow). Located between the Alexander Hamilton Bridge and High Bridge, these structures would be historically sensitive in their design; the new construction should incorporate materials similar to the existing structures. The allocation of one percent of the current parkland for the construction of recreational and educational facilities is recommended, along with a cultural site management plan. Educational programs, sponsored by the local government in partnership with local universities, should be ongoing.

One activity that could attract attention to Highbridge Park would be extension of New York City ferry tours. The new ferry route would include the Historic Bridges of the Harlem River Boat Tour. The new structures proposed for Highbridge Park could provide an intermediate stop for refreshments and scenic views of nature and the river. This ferry stop would also work as a connection to the Harlem River Historic Walk.

Addition of a new recreation center should be executed in Highbridge Park, a model for which should be the Chelsea Piers, but at smaller, more appropriate scale for the historic location. The steep topography on the east side of the Harlem River banks, particularly the northernmost portions of the park, makes this location suitable for activities such as hiking or rappelling.

### *Design Recommendations*

New educational centers in the park should not exceed 1,000 square feet. These centers should be one story high so as not to overwhelm or stand out against the existing structures. New construction should be scattered along the existing pathway in the park in order to maximize the size of the parkland. Emphasis on the viewscales in this area should be incorporated into the design of the new structure. Placement of structures should also take into account possible connections to the Harlem River Greenway, with new pedestrian crossings providing safe access over the Harlem River Drive to the Harlem River Historic Walk. A boathouse should be designed on the Manhattan side of the River, across from the proposed amphitheater and restaurant site.

### **The Tito Puente Latin and Jazz Festival**

The musical heritage of the South Bronx and East Harlem has flourished since the 1920s as Cuban, Puerto Rican and African American populations settled there. The eclectic mix of mambo, salsa and jazz resulted in a unique style of Afro-Caribbean music. In addition to Hip Hop, which later burst onto the scene, these musical rhythms, which developed out of our study area, impacted popular music worldwide. Currently, Place Matters is advocating for the protection of these cultural venues in their program, "From Mambo to Hip Hop: The Musical Landscape of the South Bronx and the early years in East Harlem". In addition, the Summer Concerts in the Park series features Latin music in Highbridge Park and Roberto Clemente State Park. Building on these two ideas, we propose additional music events that extend into the spring and fall, seasons during which the parks are seldom used. These events will be entitled "The Tito Puente Latin and Jazz Festival", sponsored by Target, Con Edison and Home Depot. Along with local musicians, Jazz at Lincoln Center's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra will play in honor of Puente and the area's musical heritage. Puente, who was born in East Harlem and later moved to the Bronx, is a long famed Latin and jazz musician and a winner of five Grammy awards. The festivals will take place on a

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barge in the Harlem River, between Sherman's Creek and Highbridge Park. It will be the social and cultural bridge linking the two boroughs. By attracting local and non-local New York City residents, the celebration and awareness will further the conservation initiative of the extensive parklands within the Central Section of the study area.

### **Sherman's Creek Area**

Although Sherman's Creek has a rich history including use as a Native American burial site, a Revolutionary War encampment, and the later commercial and industrial constructions described previously in this plan, its lack of physical remnants of this past pose limitations on the area's incorporation into a historic preservation plan. As such, the best way to preserve elements of the area's history is to incorporate historical use into plans for new development. This is best suited to the north and south shores of the Sherman's Creek area where historic uses are well documented. Along the Harlem River, near the south corner of the inlet, are several boating structures and docks of private ownership. Although their aesthetic is not a historic one, the presence of structures that cater to small recreational boating in that location has been documented since the turn of the century. With the rise in interest in the New York City waterfront, and the recent completion of the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse in adjacent Swindler's Cove, the time is ripe to put these sites to work according to their historic use.

One of the largest obstacles to implementing the recommendations in the Sherman's Creek area is the contamination of the site. According to the New York City Department of Planning, the U.S. Army Corps is in the process of evaluating the basin for dredging. Pending the completion of such work, uses along interior shores of the inlet are severely limited because of PCB contamination. Similarly, the land of the Consolidated Edison property on the north shore is also contaminated. In order to utilize this land, a massive effort (both in public support and in expenditure) is needed to undertake the cleanup of the project. (See Brownfield appendix for more information.)

### **Boathouses between Swindler's Cove and Sherman's Creek**

The proposal for this site, taking into account the precarious physical condition of the present structures, is to build new facilities in the same location. These facilities would be part of a network of sites geared toward boating on the Harlem River. Other documented locations of historic boating clubs would be potential sites to include in this network. Other boating-related sites could be included as well, such as the proposed large boat-launch on the Bronx shore (see Recommendations,) slightly to the north. These locations may be 'networked' by use of educational programs, community activities, and tours that would increase attention to recreational opportunities currently available in the region. A network of this type would be multi-leveled, with planned access to and from the proposed Historic Walk, providing stopping points and areas of interest for people on foot, bicycle, or boat.

There are several goals pertaining to the redevelopment of the site of the existing boating structures between Swindler's Cove and Sherman's Creek: the first is to provide a use and/or service that is comparable to that of the existing boathouses; the second is to improve the existing facilities and services without excluding community needs. Designs of the new boathouses should be sympathetic to the natural areas of Swindler's Cove by buffering noise or activity for returning wildlife.

#### *General Design Recommendations:*

The material and scale of new buildings should reference the historical boathouses along the Harlem. In addition, traditional forms of boathouses and their wood frame constructions should inform the design of a new structure at this site. References to form and the use of wood in the primary aesthetic of a building at this location will maintain the intimate scale already present at the water's edge, and foster a connection with an historic building type that has been lost to the Harlem River.

At other locations in the Central section, a contemporary statement about the Harlem River is encouraged. Innovative designs, not limited in construction techniques and materials, will contribute to defining a new image for the Harlem River. Such a scheme could be achieved in phases where scale and scope can be controlled on a local level with public input. Design competitions are an alternative or additional way to explore the possibilities of design and preservation in the area.

#### *Design Recommendations for a new boathouse facility near Sherman's Creek*

Construction elements of human scale are characteristic along Swindler's Cove and the shore, and new construction should maintain this level of scale. Oversized or monumental architecture should be avoided in new construction. To this end, new construction should incorporate architectural components that can be used to create scale, such as porches, trimwork, and details.

Additionally the form of the historic style of the boathouses along Sherman's Creek from around 1900 to 1930 should be used as a guiding inspiration. As such, the height of the any new structures should not exceed three stories. If possible, a new structure should have porches or porticos and use form to make references to the historical form. Flat roofs and pitched roofs without overhangs are not permissible.

Traditional boathouses display a variety of openings, ranging from attic vents to large doors on the water. The pattern, design and articulation of these openings can provide cues for design of new construction. The pattern and arrangement of windows and doors of a new building should compliment the design and use of the structure(s) and the height and width of openings should be (or make reference to) similar proportions in historic precedents. Vinyl-clad and unfinished aluminum finishes are inappropriate for windows in a new building at this site, as wood-frame windows are the historic precedent.

The most common construction materials for boathouse buildings in the time period referred to should be the predominant material used for new construction projects, in this case wood. Materials such as steel, cast stone, concrete, hardboard siding, and synthetic stucco may be considered for a new building if they are used in a manner that is compatible with either construction techniques of valid historic precedents, or if they maintain a secondary aesthetic role to the primary material of wood.

#### **Former ConEdison Power Plant Site**

The other area of Sherman's Creek most affected by loss of historic fabric is the former site of the ConEdison power plant on the north shore of the inlet between the extension of Academy Street and West 201<sup>st</sup> Street. It has a well-documented history of industrial use, but is now a parking lot. A new facility that utilizes the existing zoning designation for heavy industry is proposed for the site.

The goal is to preserve the historic dichotomy of use (recreation and industry) at Sherman's Creek by facilitating industry, while at the same time providing for the community in which it resides. In addition, the proposal aims to promote an economic stimulus that will increase jobs, and introduce a service and an educational component that adds to the layering of historical use present in the surrounding area.

The design of such a facility may involve one or more buildings. Design should take into account factors including the compatibility with the residential uses nearby. Noise, odor and other pollutions will not be welcome. The architectural design should reveal something of the dichotomy of industry and recreation inherent at the Sherman's Creek section and should incorporate an educational facility for community use.

The Sherman's Creek Regional Recycling Plant charrette project embodies these goals. With an overall vision to maintain and encourage a dichotomy of industrial and recreational uses, its program is designed to foster community participation and education, as well as provide needed economic stimulus by creating local jobs. In this plan, the south shore of the inlet would be a natural area with a soft shoreline, to complement the current programs at Swindler's Cove. The west shore would serve as a transitional area, its edge at the water becoming more defined as it approaches the area of Academy Street, at which point

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a waterfront public plaza would officially introduce the community to the Sherman's Creek inlet and to the Regional Recycling Plant. The proposed facility provides for a full scale sorting, storing and processing plant for recyclables located on the site of the former ConEdison Power Plant. The facility also includes a public redemption center and space for community education and research laboratories,

The program speaks of a new generation of industry, one more socially and environmentally conscious. While it would be constructed using traditional materials associated with industrial structures--brick, steel and glass-- the design seeks to make a modern architectural statement, and so incorporates the latest building technologies including modern curtainwall construction. In doing so, the workings of the plant are able to be displayed, effectively calling attention to its function while adding visual texture and interest. Piers that surround the structures on the site are publicly accessible to both pedestrians and visitors, serving to connect the plaza on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to a new lighted pavilion on the Harlem River. The building and pavilion would be a visible improvement along the shoreline and would serve to visually connect the area to recent improvements at Swindler's Cove as well as to a sister pavilion proposed on the Bronx shoreline at Roberto Clemente State Park. (See Appendix for the Design Charrette "Sherman's Creek Regional Recycling Plant").

#### *Design Recommendations for new building(s) on the north shore site of Sherman's Creek*

This site of the former ConEdison Power Generating Plant, and has the unique advantage of having 360 degrees of potential access. The proposed design guidelines for this site include no changes to the setbacks regulated by the current New York City Zoning Codes for the site, but they do address the orientation of any new structures. With such a potentially visually prominent site, it is important that the primary facade of a new structure wrap around three sides: the Harlem River, the Sherman's Creek Inlet and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. All truck access should be routed to the 201<sup>st</sup> Street facade of the building.

Scale is also a consideration. The former ConEdison building on this site was 8 stories on the water; the adjacent sites to the north are only 2 and 3 stories. The scale of a new structure should be prominent, reflecting the tradition of industry in the area, but the height should not exceed 8 stories.

The form of a new structure however, should explore various massing possibilities aside from that of the historic ConEdison plant. The line of Academy Street should be maintained through the design of the site or building. Public access to the Harlem River along the inlet's north shore should be part of a design as well.

Fenestration should play an important role at this site. The pattern and arrangement of windows and doors of a new building should reveal something of the design and use of the structure(s) as a means to involve the public for reasons of increasing awareness and as a tool for education. The three primary facades must have openings or architectural features that take the place of openings as a tool to break up the facade (the main objective is to avoid a solid, blank wall on a public facade.) Although the previous structure to occupy the lot was made of brick, the new construction should not be limited to this material, as a modern statement of construction technology may benefit the area; this would respond to the manner in which a recycling plant speaks to a modern statement of industry.

#### **South and West Shores of the Inlet**

This area was also historically a home to docks and boathouses, remains of which are buried in the mud of the inlet. This portion of the site currently has two distinct uses: The south portion is utilized as a nature walk for nearby educational programs; the portion along the western shore of the inlet, including a one-story building, is paved over and currently serves as a parking lot for the Park's Department. In keeping with the separation that is already present, and the aforementioned concept of a dichotomy between industry and recreation, it is recommended that the southern portion remain a natural setting and the western portion a transitional area to the industrial uses of the north shore site.

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The southern shore of the inlet should be kept as a recreational space with minimal landscaping and paths needed, along with provisions for seating areas. The single-story brick building on the western site, currently serving as a maintenance facility for the New York City Parks Department, should be adaptively reused. Uses that provide services to the nearby community should be central to the new program. Possible uses include a small café with minimal parking and outdoor seating or a community center (may include construction of additional square footage).

Special attention should be paid to view corridors; the design proposals should emphasize views from various locations, for instance, toward Sherman's Creek from the Harlem River Speedway, and from the Harlem River itself across the river toward the Bronx. In particular, the corners of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 201<sup>st</sup>/Academy Street, and of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the pedestrian bridge near Dyckman Avenue, have the potential of being highly visible. These sightlines should be incorporated to promote the area of Sherman's Creek and to increase the visibility of the Manhattan Greenway as it runs along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Later phasing may also include the extension of the proposed Historic Walk up to the site of the former ConEdison plant along the north shore of the inlet, encouraging the linkage of paths and programs along the reaches of the Harlem River.

### **Inwood Waterfront and Fordham Landing Area**

The industrial sites that contribute significantly to the fabric of the Central area are currently subject to a variety of pressures, as previously described. These may pose threats to the physical structures themselves or to their value in characterizing the region's development. The following are recommendations intended to guide stakeholders in these projects toward solutions that seek to maintain historical continuity while incorporating strategies for growth and improvement. In most cases, these require the cooperation of both city agencies and the community boards and constituents in these localities. While this is often not a seamless process in which the initial goals are integrated into the final product, the strategies are intentionally malleable and contain directives that can be implemented in phases to accommodate normal administrative processes.

The sites and buildings along the Harlem River in Inwood and Fordham Landing, which include the New York State-managed MTA 207<sup>th</sup> Street Maintenance Yard and the New York City-operated Manhattan Incinerator, share the aspect of public ownership or stewardship. These pose challenges to preservation, in that new changes to these historic sites would trigger review processes and recommendations of a non-binding, advisory nature. Broader protection can be extended to the legacy of public investment in the Inwood community by researching and establishing eligibility of these sites for the National Register, under National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Criterion A: Event, by which the property contributed to "a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a State, or the nation." (Refer to the appendix regarding SEQR, Section 106k, and Section 4(f) acts.)

Also, the Manhattan Incinerator (1934) would be an excellent property to designate as a New York City Landmark, a precedent for which has been set by the designation in 1982 of the Bronx Grit Chamber, built in 1937. It represents a distinct statement on the part of the municipality regarding the importance of sanitation and public works in this community. It makes this statement with dignity in a formal manner using the Stripped-Classical style, in an era of great public investment. This would afford the incinerator protection under local binding recommendations by the City Landmarks Commission.

The industrial districts of Inwood and University Heights consist of many under-built lots zoned M1-1 and M3-1, which allow light and heavy industrial uses, respectively. These discourage new investment under the current zoning, and preclude introducing more contemporary uses to the neighborhood. To encourage new types of activity in the area, a special mixed-use district is proposed in the area bound by 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Harlem River from 201<sup>st</sup> to 207<sup>th</sup> Street in Inwood. While no changes to the current zoning are necessary in the lots between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues to incorporate a mixed-use zoning district, those lots between 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Harlem River, currently zoned M3-1 for heavy industrial uses,

would be changed to M1-1. This would allow for an influx of new investment in an area where large-scale industrial production and nuisance utilities have substantially declined. (Refer to the Zoning appendix.)

In addition, this portion of Inwood is part of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, enabling new commercial development to derive substantial tax benefits and access to low-interest loans for company relocation, property rehabilitation, and job creation within the zone. (Refer to the financial incentives appendix for information about the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.)<sup>48</sup> Implementation of mixed-use zoning district in the proposed areas would maintain the low-rise, warehouse type of industrial/commercial construction typically found there. The development of alternative uses, incorporating studios, artist loft space, and cafes or restaurants, paired with subdividing larger existing structures to accommodate smaller manufacturing ventures, could create a less industrially based local economy and attract new businesses. If new construction of a contextual character is inserted into the voids on these sites, incorporating new versions of traditional use patterns, the community and its built fabric could be reinvigorated, ensuring protection for the district's unique character.

Additional opportunities for investment and community participation are present in the streetscapes that bisect the Inwood waterfront, specifically, Ninth and Tenth Avenues. These streets, which function informally as links for the unfinished Manhattan Greenway north and south, are an integral part of the surrounding fabric, and could be the subject of campaigns to improve public access, safety, and local aesthetics. Similar "beautification" programs, e.g. Bruckner Boulevard in Mott Haven (See Recent Initiatives Appendix), have the result of attracting pedestrian traffic, instilling a sense of community in local property and business owners, and highlighting area resources. These programs can be tailored to fit the district through community board participation and implementation and can incorporate locally produced art, street furniture design competitions, and historic routes with interpretive plaques depicting historic sites and viewsapes.

Another contentious issue on the waterfront in Inwood is the patchwork of fenced off lots, dead-end streets, and debris strewn bulkheads along the water's edge that comprise the proposed site for the New York Restoration Project's connection to the Manhattan Greenway.<sup>49</sup> Assembling the pieces needed to realize the greenway vision requires cooperation from numerous landowners, and may necessitate obtaining easements on these properties. In the interim, a Ninth Avenue beautification project would serve to substitute as the greenway link, and incorporate elements of the Harlem River Historic Walk described above in the Recreational Resource recommendations section of this plan.

Likewise, establishing a strictly pedestrian thoroughfare where there has historically been none brings into question whether industrial or recreational waterfront uses should predominate. Though unimpeded accessibility in the area has been identified by some groups as a goal, discrete recreation and access points with specific programs may reflect more accurately the historic shoreline condition. In any case, changes to the waterfront and adjacent lots should incorporate the various uses historically found there, as opposed to applying a blanket solution that addresses only the contemporary desire to open up the entire riverfront to public use. Clearly, there is a need for more mixed-use proposals in order to maintain continuity amid the various demands for usage.

Waterside access on the Bronx shore presents an issue yet to be sufficiently addressed. Other than the boating areas in Roberto Clemente State Park to the south, where locked chain-link fences and gates deter use, there are no opportunities for recreational river usage. In order to increase this type of usage in the Bronx, it is recommended that the neglected riverfront site just north of the University Heights Bridge, owned by the Department of General Services, be utilized. It contains intact and serviceable concrete and wood slips that can be converted to allow for public boat launching and storage facilities, a use not out of context with the local zoning and history. In addition, the adjacent lots have recently been used as the site for new self-storage facilities, which provide a complementary function to the proposed boat launch. To the south of the bridge abutment, the Bronx Borough President's Office plans to construct high-density housing in the area currently serving as parking.<sup>50</sup> Projects such as the boat launch would contribute greatly toward fostering a new community on the Harlem River.

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