



# PERSPECTIVE NEW YORK

The comprehensive view of real estate, design and construction

TOP OWNERS  
REPRESENTATIVES

cover price \$6.00

VOL. 7, NO. 6 September 2008

## GARDINER & THEOBALD

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...WELCOME TO BROOKLYN, USA

# Welcome to



By Robert D. Greenberg, AICP

**If you think you know Brooklyn you've got a lot to learn. Its image has been polished up lately and the borough is one of the 'in' places to live, work, and play. There is a fabulous array of exciting, large scale redevelopments, rezoning initiatives, and 'greening' projects occurring across the borough.**

## REZONING VS. PRESERVATION

While rezoning is often the stimulus needed to jump-start redevelopment of an area, rezoning efforts are not without controversy. Some preservation groups and neighborhood associations are concerned that 'upzoning' of their neighborhoods will fundamentally change the nature of their communities, and not necessarily for the better. Some rezoning plans are being implemented that specifically preserve the character of the neighborhoods, such as the plan for Midwood.

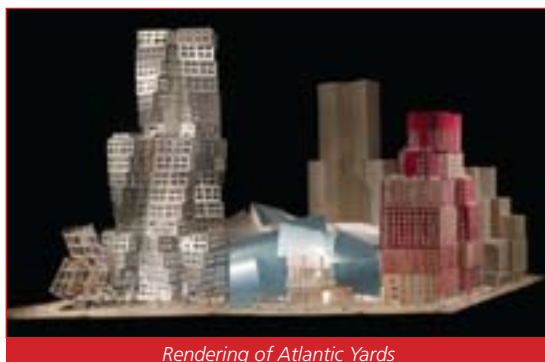
## RED HOOK'S EVOLUTION

The Red Hook Port, as an example, was being touted as the site for a 120-acre major residential complex, but keeping good-paying blue collar jobs at the docks was ultimately viewed as more important. The Red Hook waterfront is undergoing significant development concurrent with the new \$200 million cruise line terminal set to house the largest cruise ships in the world for **Norwegian Cruise Lines** and **Carnival Corporation**. **Thor Equities** plans to build residential housing, stores, and a marina on the old Revere sugar refinery property. A BJ's Wholesale Club is a possible tenant. While nothing is finalized, some local residents fear the arrival of another giant retailer to interfere with what is now a quiet waterfront.

## GO NAVY

The Brooklyn Navy Yard spans the length of the Brooklyn waterfront from Vinegar Hill to Williamsburg. The complex of 40 buildings covers over 300 acres and has four functioning dry docks and five active piers. Today, it functions as an industrial park with tenants representing a variety of uses from construction to office space. **Steiner Studios**, the largest film and television studio complex outside of Hollywood, has invested over

\$50 million for renovations and expansions. In February 2008, the Navy Yard has agreed to join with Steiner to create a "media campus" and to encourage green manufacturing companies to find a home at the site. There are also plans to dredge and fill in the basin off Kent Avenue in Williamsburg to create 4 more acres of developable land as well as up to 3,000 jobs. The three-building **SurroundArt Museum Resource** campus is under development. The plans include an 89,000 SF building and two 71,000 SF buildings and the adaptive re-use of the historic, century-old Paymaster Building.



Rendering of Atlantic Yards

The Municipal Arts Society proposed a plan for the Brooklyn Navy Yards' Admiral's Row. The plan includes the preservation of the old housing in Admiral's Row that was formerly military housing, and includes a much-needed supermarket and industrial development.

## THE GOWANUS CANAL REZONING PLAN

The Gowanus neighborhood is next to undergo a major transformation. Among the five sub-zones being created, **Shaya Boymelgreen** plans to build **Gowanus Village**, a 375,000 unit, mixed-use development with 350 apartments and condominiums stretching from Carroll Street to Third Street, and from the Gowanus Canal to Third Avenue. **Toll Brothers** and numerous other developers are buying land in the area as well. Many environmentalists support Gowanus development as a means of using private investors' money to clean the canal and its environs.

## BAM CULTURAL DISTRICT

City officials are planning to transform the area between Fulton and Lafayette streets near Fort Greene Park into a cultural haven for artists and performers. The \$650 million **Brooklyn Academy of Music Cultural District** will be built around the existing academy and will include a library, dance studio, public park, museum and gallery, underground parking and

# Brooklyn USA!



a 20-story residential high-rise. The project will also include the 299-seat, Frank Gehry-designed **Theater for a New Audience**. The new **Visual and Performing Arts Library** will be part of the Brooklyn public library system, to be located on Flatbush Avenue.

## THE BRIG SITE

The City's Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD) has selected **Navy Green Joint Venture** (Dunn Development Corporation, L&M Equity Participants, Ltd. and Pratt Area Community Council) as the developer of the **Brig Site** in Wallabout. The design calls for a mixed-income, mixed-use site that will include 434 dwelling units including 77% affordable housing, a visual arts theater, day care center, commercial space and open space. The complex will be LEED certified.

## ROOM AT THE INN

As of the first quarter of 2008, Brooklyn counted 700 new hotel rooms with 2,000 more in various stages of development in all corners of the borough ranging from Bedford-Stuyvesant to Emmons Avenue in Sheepshead Bay to the stylish **Hotel Bleu** on 4th Avenue, just steps from the Gowanus Canal. **Hersha Hospitality's Nu Hotel**, located at 95 Smith Street in Boerum Hill, opened earlier this month and is Brooklyn's first boutique hotel.

## ATLANTIC YARDS

**Forest City Ratner** announced that they plan to break ground on the **Atlantic Yards** project in December of this year. The \$4 billion project will rise on the 22-acre site, at the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues, and will include a \$950 million 18,000-seat basketball arena for the Brooklyn Nets, a mix of over 6,400 affordable, middle-income and market-rate units of housing; 748,000 SF of office and retail space, a hotel, eight acres of open space, and parking for approximately 3,800 cars. Forest City Ratner Companies has hired world-renowned architect Frank Gehry and landscape architect Laurie Olin to oversee the design of the development. Opponents of the project are concerned that the project may squander taxpayer dollars, displace existing residents and businesses and substantially increase area traffic.



*The Toren*

## SEEKING NATIONAL RETAILERS

From the new **IKEA** in Red Hook to the **Trader Joe's** on Atlantic Avenue in Cobble Hill, to the new **Target** at The Junction in Flatbush, the **Whole Foods** at the Gowanus Canal, the **Lowes** on 9th Street to the **Morton's Steak House** in Downtown Brooklyn, the Brooklyn borough president, Marty Markowitz, has been actively working to attract national, top-of-the-line retailers to the borough, including "talk of a **JC Penney** on the way and I'm working on getting **Nordstrom's** or Nordstrom's Rack to Brooklyn."

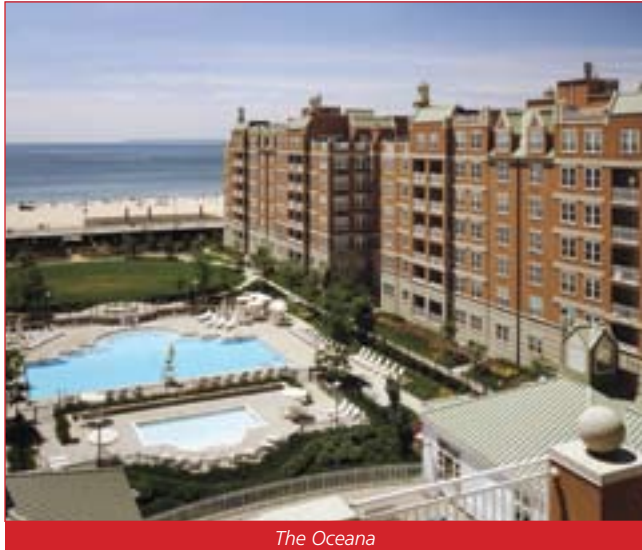
## INCREASING GREEN SPACE

Brooklyn has the lowest per capita amount of parkland in the state. That is about to change. **Brooklyn Bridge Park**, an 85-acre former industrial site, is now under development, with completion scheduled in 2009. From the 'floating' swimming pool to the vast green spaces to the elegant waterfront promenade, it will be the borough's largest new park created in almost 150 years.

Fifteen years ago, the City outlined a vision for a citywide 350-mile network of greenways. The **Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway** project area now spans 14 miles of Brooklyn waterfront. The proposed Greenway will stretch from Sunset Park to Newtown Creek in Greenpoint. When completed, it will provide a human scale connection between numerous waterfront neighborhoods now divided by highways and rail lines, further enhancing the quality of life for all residents.



*Brooklyn Bridge Park*



*The Oceana*

**BFC Partners**, developers of **Schaeffer Landing** in Williamsburg, are currently developing the **Toren**, a 38-story, 240-unit green condominium, at 150 Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene. Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the Toren, the Dutch word for “tower,” will feature a range of housing choices from studios to three-bedroom duplex penthouse units. Toren, striving for silver LEED-certification, will be an eco-friendly building, fully equipped with its own cogeneration plant.

### **BRIGHTON BEACH’S NEWEST COMMUNITY**

**Muss Development’s** 15-building, 865-unit gated community bordering the Atlantic Ocean has become one of the city’s real estate success stories. In its 10 years **The Oceana**, on the property that was the long-time home of the Brighton Beach Baths, has contributed to Brighton Beach’s transformation from lower middle class neighborhood to South Brooklyn affluent stronghold. The 15-acre site’s salmon-colored buildings with white balconies and shapely trees form their own little miniature village. The 40-minute express train from Brighton Beach to downtown Manhattan attracts a wide audience to Brighton Beach.

### **CONEY ISLAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

For nearly a century, The Steeplechase, The Parachute Jump and The Cyclone typified Coney Island and symbolized Brooklyn to the world.



*Redeveloped Coney Island rendering*

“America’s Playground” is about to be transformed to compete with the finest entertainment and amusement complexes in the region. After 46 years in operation, Astroland has officially closed, making way for future redevelopment of the site. A world-class recreational facility and performing arts center is under design development, and phase two of lighting up the Parachute Jump—Brooklyn’s version of the dazzling light show on the Eiffel Tower—is underway.

The proposed zoning covers three areas—dubbed **Coney East, West, and North**—encompassing approximately 19 blocks running from the New York Aquarium to West 24th Street, and from Mermaid Avenue to the famed Riegelmann Boardwalk. In a move to preserve the amusement district in Coney East, a 15-acre area that is home to the landmarked 1939 New York World’s Fair Parachute Jump, the area will be designated as parkland in perpetuity and includes a 250-foot height limit to preserve views to Coney Island’s iconic structures. **Thor Equities** has spent \$100 million during the last few years to purchase 12 acres, roughly two-thirds of the amusement district in Coney East, and was planning to spend \$2 billion constructing a 2 million SF hotel and entertainment complex designed by Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn.

The proposed new zoning plan offers opportunities in the Coney North and Coney West districts, 10.6 acres and 15.4 acres respectively, for more than 1 million SF of new development on Surf Avenue including zoning for hotels, water parks, restaurants, and entertainment venues such as bowling alleys and movie theaters. The comprehensive plan also allows for the development of more than 1,750 housing units in Coney North, adjacent to existing residential areas, and roughly 2,700 units west of KeySpan Park. The City’s plan includes 900 units of affordable housing.

### **A BRIGHT FUTURE**

A world class city like Brooklyn needs and deserves a comprehensive approach that will foster redevelopment of long-abandoned industrial sites, recapture the waterfront for the people, clean up contaminated locations, create and expand parks and recreational centers, and improve the overall quality of life for its residents. In every community you can see that Brooklyn is evolving—changing for the better. The goal of the people and the government that serves them is to strive to create the appropriate balance between development and preservation and plan for the decades to follow. ■