

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN DIAZ Jr.
VISIONS FOR BRONX SHORELINES

- **Slide 1-Introduction** Owing to the shipping industry, historically much of New York City's shoreline was marked with industrial facilities located adjacent to the waterfront. During the 1940's 50's and 60's, as this industry slowly vanished, Robert Moses took advantage of these decaying properties where he constructed many of our city's highways. In the west Bronx these included the Major Deegan Expressway running parallel to the Harlem River and in the central Bronx there is the Sheridan Expressway running parallel to the Bronx River. In the east Bronx we lost several waterfront views to history. Now, we can celebrate their planned restoration as key locations offering magnificent panoramas of Long Island Sound and the East River are identified and reclaimed. Many of these endeavors remain a work in progress as we return to our shores, waterways and bays, and where feasible, create destinations for recreational activity while always improving the sensitive ecology of these vital areas.

The focus of our 8 minute presentation today are "low hanging fruit" opportunities that can significantly expand waterfront access for all Bronx citizens and our visitors.

- **Slide 2-Discretionary Investment** Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. is committed to this objective and is working with a diverse group of city agencies and community organizations. During the current fiscal year the Borough President allocated a total of \$4,690,000, which is 12% of his total discretionary budget, surpassed by only Education and Housing. Important to note however, is that in many instances these funds leveraged additional support from other elected officials and government agencies.
- **Slide 3-Objectives for the Bronx waterfront** Establish public access, protect natural resources, upgrade existing parks and identify new waterfront sites.
- **Slide 4-The Bronx Waterfronts** The Harlem River, Bronx River, East River/Long Island Sound.
- **Slide 5 The Harlem River**
- **Slide 6 Harlem River Community Districts 1, 4, 5, & 7** The numbers are startling. Highlights show that the median household income *average* along the Harlem River is \$25,000 per year against a citywide average of \$48,750. The area is also very young, with an average of 35% being below the age of 18. Consequently, open space is heavily used by young people, many of whom rely on these areas for their recreational needs. Finally, it is critical to note that in Bronx Community District 5, the amount of designated parkland measured against the district's population shows that there are approximately 2,789 people for every acre of open space.

- **Slide 7 Harlem River Map** As this map shows, the opportunity for creating a greenbelt along the Harlem River is feasible, offering an approximate total of 65 acres of property for such use.
- **Slide 8 Harlem River Parks** Mill Pond Park, Building J, The Highbridge and Roberto Clemente State Park are all in place, under city or state jurisdiction and are funded.
- **Slides 9 & 10 Mill Pond Park-- Where we were/Where we are**
- **Slide 11 Building J** Now in place is a park office and the home of the tennis concession. Of special mention is that this building is LEED Certified.
- **Slide 12 The Highbridge** The City of New York is committed to the restoration of this pedestrian link between Manhattan and The Bronx. The Highbridge is actually the oldest span in the City originally constructed in the 1880's to bring drinking water into New York from the Croton Reservoir. A special note of appreciation is offered to Congressman Jose Serrano who allocated \$5 million for this project.
- **Slide 13 Bridge Park-5.2 Acres** A critical piece of property already designated as park property, located between the Highbridge and Roberto Clemente State Park. The Bronx Borough President's Office allocated funding for a greenway path and additional park improvements.
- **Slide 14 Roberto Clemente State Park** Located in Bronx Community District 5, this state owned facility is one the State's most heavily used parks. It consists of 25 acres of riverbank property. Recently a \$20 million allocation was made to improve many of the park's facilities.
- ****** Slide 15 Harlem River: Future Sites for Public Access** Potential sites waiting for development range from the entrance point of Park Avenue in the Bronx, to areas north of the University Heights Bridge.
- **Slide 16 Lower Grand Concourse Park Site** In 2009 the Bronx Office of the Department of City Planning proposed a major rezoning of the Grand Concourse, south of East 149th Street. As a part of this proposal which gleaned the support of the Borough President's office, a 2 acre site at the foot of East 144th Street was identified for a river bank park.
- ******Slide 17 Pier 5** Waiting for funds and a vision, this 4 acre site will serve as the southern boundary of Mill Pond Park.
- **Slide 18 Metro North Railroad Yard** The objective here is to work with Metro North Railroad officials to best determine how a public easement along the Harlem River can be designed, which if installed, would offer a vital link to proposed parks to the north.

- **Slide 19 New Tabernacle Baptist Church** This 2 acre property now occupied by a dog kennel and in private hands, awaits the needed funds for property purchase.
- **Slide 20 DCAS Scaffolding Site** Currently this 4 acre site is leased by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to a scaffolding company. As the site is owned by the city, what is needed most are monies for design and development of a park.
- **Slide 21 Fordham Landing** This privately owned site, consisting of approximately 4 acres is a vital link if the Harlem River bank park is to extend to and north of Fordham Road.
- **Slide 22 DCAS Parcel** Consisting of nearly 4 acres, this underdeveloped site needs to be transferred to the Department of Parks, and requires funds for design and construction of the continuation of a Harlem River Bank Park.
- **Slide 23 Bronx River** Thanks to the dedication of a wide range of private and public interests, along with a determination by an outstanding staff of park and environmental professionals, The Bronx River is awake and rebounding following nearly one hundred years of abuse. Beavers are seen, herring is thriving and birds are nesting along its banks. In fiscal year 2011 the Borough President identified four Bronx River projects to receive capital funding.
- **Slide 24 The Bronx River Map** In Hunts Point, going north to the Bronx County Line, parks now in place offer an increasing opportunity for public access on the Bronx River. All told, there are nearly one thousand acres of open space that borders the Bronx River within Bronx County.
- **Slide 25 Bronx River Community Districts 2, 3, 6, 9, 12** Median household income ranges from a low of \$16,536 per year in District 6, to a high of \$38,627 in District 12. At the same time, Community District 12 shows a dire need for more open space, as there are 2,808 people for every acre of mapped parks within this northern most district. Here too, the population is young with approximately 33% of those living within these community districts being under 18.
- **Slide 26 Hunts Point/Riverside Park** The ground breaking for this park was heralded in by Bette Midler. Now it is a thriving facility serving Hunts Point.
- **Slide 27 Soundview Park** This vital open space consisting of nearly 200 acres is the link between Long Island Sound and the East River.
- **Slide 28 Concrete Plant Park** This seven acre gem shows what vision and determination can create. It took years to realize, but today this site once dominated by a rusting concrete factory is now a restored greenbelt featuring the same industrial profile with a restored piece of Bronx River history.

- **Slide 29 Starlight Park** At one time Bronx residents came to this area for an amusement park. Today, much of this 12 acre park is under construction, and when completed will offer the central Bronx a real opportunity to access the Bronx River.
- **Slide 30 River Park** Virtually unknown to so many people, this gem of open space offers a magnificent view of one of three waterfalls along the Bronx River.
- **Slide 31 Bronx Park** 718 acres--there is no need to comment--this is one of the world's most magnificent parks.
- **Slide 32 Shoelace Park** Consisting of 47 acres, this linear park travels from the northern boundary of Bronx Park to the Bronx County line.
- **Slide 33 East River/Long Island Sound** Here is where parks and waterfronts merge, making the Bronx the "Borough of Parks" (a title given to it during the LaGuardia administration).
- **Slide 34 East River/Long Island Sound Map** Ferry Point Park consisting of 413 acres and Pelham Bay Park consisting of 2,200 acres brings the waterfront to the people.
- **Slide 35 Community Profiles** Community Districts 9 and 10 offer ample open space to those residing here. Indeed, in Community District 10 there are only 34 people per acre of open space, but given that Pelham Bay Park is a regional destination and that so many people visit both Orchard Beach and City Island, it would not be accurate to suggest that these parks are underutilized.
- **Slide 36 Clason Point Park & Marina (Slide 36)** Like so many parks along the Sound, this area offers a breath taking view coupled with a refreshing breath of salty air. The marina is being redeveloped, restoring boating access to the East River from the Bronx.
- **Slide 37 Castle Hill Lookout** Situated at the end of Castle Hill Avenue, and boarding the YMCA site, this area is likely to become a fantastic place for nearby residents to enjoy a look at the Throggs Neck Bridge .
- **Slide 38 Ferry Point Park** Once a city landfill, this 413 acre gem on Long Island Sound offer a waterfront park for the community and a champion golf course for golfers region wide. Following years of mis-starts and delays, it is expected that the cry of "FOUR" will soon be heard.
- **Slide 39 Eastchester Bay** This port along City Island now provides docking space for a substantial number of small vessels. Since at least 2003 the Borough President's Office has advocated for the dredging of Eastchester Bay. This would allow vessels of a more substantial size to dock, thereby further expand and support the maritime industry on City Island.

- **Slide 40 Beldon Point on City Island** Thanks to Senator Jeffery Klein, Bronx and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr, this historic marker on Long Island Sound is now being redesigned and soon will be constructed at the tip of City Island Avenue. Of special mention are the many residents who have provided to the Department of Parks and Recreation their historic perspectives on this area's significance.
- **Slide 41 Pelham Bay Park/Orchard Beach** It has been approximately forty years since the sands of Orchard Beach, a manmade facility, were restored. Congressmen Joseph Crowley and Jose Serrano, along with the Army Corp of Engineers are to be thanked for making this replenishment possible. This summer the Bronx Riviera will shine more brightly than ever as a destination for hundreds of thousands of people looking for a family friendly place to introduce their kids to the marvels of the waterfront in the Bronx, New York.
- **Slide 42 Co-Op City/Hutchinson River Lookout Site** Named for Ann Hutchinson, a first woman in American History, this river borders the largest residential complex in New York City. One vision which would open up this river to those living at Co-Op City, is to create a lookout and waterfront promenade along the Hutchinson River.