

TAKE ME TO THE **River**

Implementation Projects

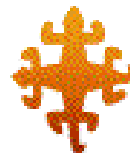


Executive
Summary

August 31, 2008



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN



*West Harlem
Art Fund*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Office of Manhattan Borough
President Scott M. Stringer**

**State of New York
Department of State
Division of Coastal Resource**

West Harlem Art Fund

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Aerial Photograph of Study Area

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER 05.14.08



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Take Me to the River is a project intended to build on the economic and cultural strengths of the thriving and diverse West Harlem and southern Washington Heights neighborhoods, and on the recreational opportunities and beauty of their Hudson River waterfront. After years of work by active local residents, businesses and cultural leaders, a Concept Plan was created in 2004-2005 by the Office of the Manhattan Borough President funded under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund's (EPF) Local Waterfront Revitalization Program through the New York State's Division of Coastal Resources, a grant won by the West Harlem Art Fund. The 2005 Concept Plan is a comprehensive set of recommendations grown out of a community planning process.



Take Me to the River 2005 Concept Plan

In 2007 the Borough President and West Harlem Art Fund obtained an additional grant, also under the EPF, for Take Me to the River: Implementation Projects. This will carry forward several of the Concept Plan's key recommendations and bring it closer to realization by planning for new streetscape improvements, pedestrian access and other transportation to Riverside Park and the waterfront, and by promoting the area's cultural resources.

The study area for Take Me to the River: Implementation Projects is located from West 135th to 157th Streets between Broadway and Riverside Drive. This project area differs from that of the 2005 Concept Plan, which extends from Broadway to the Hudson River from 143rd to 155th Streets. The new project area stretches further to the north and south, but does not include Riverside Park. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has received a separate grant to develop a Master Plan for the adjacent parts of Riverside Park and Fort Washington Park.

The project study area is set within the dynamic context of both West Harlem/Hamilton Heights and southern Washington Heights. These areas are characterized by high density residential apartment buildings, bustling retail shops on Broadway, a concentration of cultural treasures especially around Audubon Terrace, and historically significant buildings and sites.

The unique character of the project area is the result of more than a century of cultural, architectural and recreational development that brought about the area's transition from a bucolic countryside in the 1800s to the densely developed urban environment that exists today. Within the study area there are two NYC landmark structures, the Church of the Intercession and the Hamilton Theater. In addition, the Audubon Terrace Historic District contains a group of architecturally significant landmark buildings on land that was part of the estate of John James Audubon and later developed by famous philanthropist Archer M. Huntington. (For more information on the neighborhoods' existing conditions, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 1 - Summary of Existing Conditions and Use Analysis.)

PROJECT GOALS

The Manhattan Borough President's Office, West Harlem Art Fund, and their partners in the New York State Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources established the following goals for Take Me to the River: Implementation Projects (TMTTR).



Broadway, Photo by Nautilus International, 2008

Goal 1 – Create a community-based neighborhood improvement plan.

Goal 2 – Improve transportation and interconnect resources.

Goal 3 – Enhance streetscapes and sustain urban vitality.

Goal 4 – Promote cultural assets.

(For more information on the project goals, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Introduction.)

PLANNING FRAMEWORK & KEY FINDINGS

TMTTR's Planning Framework broadly defines three zones of activity along Broadway corresponding to the major east-west access routes that connect Riverside Park with Broadway's economic corridor: a cultural hub at 155th Street, a commercial gateway at 145th Street, and a neighborhood/educational center around Montefiore Park from 135th to 138th Street.

Key study findings correspond to those areas, along with the powerful commercial spine of the Broadway corridor and residential neighborhoods that surround it. In addition, key economic development findings from the original TMTTR's 2005 Concept Plan are discussed.

Cultural Hub:

Taking advantage of the historic Audubon Terrace as its nucleus, a cultural hub is centered at 155th Street and Broadway. The hub broadens out to include Trinity Cemetery, the Church of the Intercession and other churches along 155th Street, Payán Park just to the north, and the Broadway Malls.

The concept is to create a larger "museum district" surrounding Audubon Terrace that transforms it from an isolated complex into an integral part of the urban fabric and life of the community. The cultural district embraces the residential neighborhood to the north, the commercial corridor on Broadway including the #1 subway station at 157th Street, the 155th Street crosstown corridor, access on 155th under Riverside Drive to both Riverside and Ft. Washington Parks, and Trinity Cemetery.

Reinforcing the cross-axis of the Broadway Malls and 155th Street will be a new outdoor cultural plaza with spectacular views of the Hudson River as well as public access improvements. This hub provides a place to



begin promoting the rich culture of the neighborhood through unified marketing, special events and a communications plan. All of these elements are described in more detail below in the transportation plan, streetscape guidelines, and cultural plan.

The following box shows key recommendations for implementing the community's vision of the cultural hub.

Cultural Hub – 155th Street Corridor

- *Create a Steering Committee to spearhead all improvements, strategies, and recommendations for a new cultural hub*
- *Create a plaza on 155th Street, and alter traffic patterns to make this truly a gateway to the river*
- *Improve the 155th Street tunnel and overlook through new lighting, a skylight and a stairway connecting the two street levels*
- *Implement streetscaping guidelines, such as Broadway's and 155th Street's, to create a new sense of place*
- *Repair, maintain, and rehab the 157th Street #1 subway station*
- *Upgrade physical environment through new medians, traffic circulation, banners, public art, wayfinding signage – all of which are unique to the neighborhood*
- *Renovate and expand Ilka Tanya Payán Park*
- *Create temporary structures to house art or provide food kiosks or band shells*
- *Use creative lighting to enhance building facades of Audubon Terrace*
- *Develop historic assets through research and applications for additional historic districts and designations*
- *Create a marketing theme and event to promote the hub and neighborhood, such as "Live from 155!;/En Vivo desde la 155!" or another catchy phrase*

Commercial Gateway:

145th Street and Broadway is ideal for uses and economic generators that have a regional attractiveness because they can take advantage of its large volumes of

pedestrian traffic, wide streets and sidewalks, and mass transit.

The cluster of under-built properties at the corners of the intersection provides opportunities for transit-oriented development of mixed-use commercial buildings including affordable housing within contextual building envelopes.

Of the two and a half million visitors who enjoy Riverbank State Park each year, the majority of them use the gate and bridge at 145th Street and Riverside Drive, a short distance from Broadway, offering potential economic benefits to what could become a "green gateway" to West Harlem.

The following box shows key recommendations for implementing the community's vision of the commercial gateway.

Gateway – 145th Street Corridor

- *Conduct a traffic study to determine if lane reduction is possible*
- *If so, reduce travel lanes between Broadway and Riverside Drive to allow extra space for bike lanes and streetscaping*
- *Add new planting, lighting and other streetscape elements*
- *Improve the stairs and ADA accessible elevator to Riverside Park in Riverbank State Park.*
- *Repair, maintain, and rehab the 145th Street #1 subway station*
- *Expand the concept of "Live From 155!" down to 145th Street as the hub concept evolves*

Neighborhood/Educational Center:

Another regional magnet, City College of New York (CCNY), brings 13,000 of some of the brightest students in the City along with faculty and staff to the southern part of the study area focused around Montefiore Park and the #1 subway station at 137th Street. They will soon be joined by students at Columbia University's new Manhattanville



campus. Also located nearby are IS 195 Roberto Clemente School below 135th Street and PS 192 across Hamilton Place. This is an important opportunity to combine the assets of the existing dense residential neighborhood and incoming intellectual energy to create a neighborhood/ educational center benefiting everyone by including affordable housing and new commercial uses, such as bookstores, coffee shops, and moderately priced restaurants.

Broadway Spine & Residential

Neighborhood: Linking these three zones of activity is the vibrant commercial spine along Broadway graced with the landscaped Broadway Malls and lined by an unusually cohesive and architecturally distinguished succession of apartment buildings. This is the backbone of the area. In 2005, Take Me to the River proposed a combination of two approaches to economic development on Broadway, which this phase of work has built upon.

1. Around the Commercial Gateway at 145th Street, “the creation of economic generators that will elevate the performance and value of the existing inventory of retail spaces and invite larger, franchise retailers into the community from the outside.”
2. In the other commercial zoned areas of Broadway, however, we continue to advocate that conditions should be created that are “suited to the incremental development of neighborhood retail (local restaurants and family-owned businesses) that appeal to characteristics of the local community.”

Riverside Drive: As the counterpoint to the linear sweep of Broadway and the City’s geometric street grid, Riverside Drive offers an elegant curving and gracious tree-lined promenade. Its many historic structures and overlooks provide a series of interesting places to stop along the way, enjoy the views up and down the Hudson, and catch breezes coming off the River. This series of places often reinforce stairs or ramps where

there is access to the lower parts of Riverside Park. Renovating and re-using these historic elements and reinterpreting their function and design will recapture many undervalued neighborhood assets. An example can already be seen in the Invisible Man sculpture at 150th Street, which has become a beloved community destination and source of pride.

Waterfront Access Routes: TMTR is driven by this community’s passion for reconnecting with their greatest natural resource and historic heritage, the Hudson River. While West Harlem’s privileged location overlooking the River is enviable, there are substantial natural and man-made obstacles to accessing it. This framework is structured around a series of east-west streets that create a network of circulation and activity throughout the community. Each of these waterfront routes leads to either an entrance to Riverside or Riverbank State Parks, or to a significant neighborhood feature along Riverside Drive such as an overlook, playground, or garden.

The following box shows key recommendations for implementing the community’s vision of the residential neighborhood and waterfront routes.

Residential Neighborhood & Waterfront Routes

- *Conduct a traffic study to determine if lane reduction is possible*
- *If so, reduce travel lanes on 135th Street between Broadway and Riverside Drive to allow extra space for bike lanes and streetscaping*
- *Add new planting, lighting and other streetscape elements*
- *Implement all recommendations for sidewalk repairs along Riverside Drive, Broadway and cross streets*
- *Improve access to waterfront through improvements for cyclists, signage, and streetscaping that lead visitors to the parks at 135, 138, 139, 142, 145, 149, 151, 153, and 155th Streets*

Economic Development: Discussed in more detail in Chapter 2-1, this Planning Framework needs to be reconnected with an economic development plan for the project. Although this was not part of the scope for this project, key recommendations in the 2005 Concept Plan included:

- Market Study analysis of retail, housing and other market environments
- Urban design guidelines for Broadway that would ensure that streetscape improvements recommended in this study are implemented with consistency and cohesiveness
- Creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) to help the community provide services and improve the overall business environment
- Creation of a Local Development Corporation (LDC) to work with existing agencies and economic development entities
- Analyze soft sites in the neighborhood, particularly along the economic corridor of Broadway, to promote a mix of residential including affordable housing, commercial, retail, community facilities, and recreational uses.

(For more information on the planning framework, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 2-1 – Planning Framework & Economic Development.)

FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES

The top priorities for fundraising for all of the transportation, streetscape, and cultural recommendations are listed below. These are divided into 1) projects to do without fundraising and 2) projects to fund.

Top Projects To Do Without Fundraising

Below is an alphabetical list of both short- and long-term TMTTR projects that can be done without fundraising by

tapping into available resources of public agencies. While these do not require fundraising, they do need support and advocacy by the residents, elected officials, and Community Boards. Each of the projects on this list is described further in the following sections, and in detail in the *Project Summary Report*.

Short-Term:

Bike Racks & Bike Parking Installations (NYCDOT)
Bus Service Frequency (NYCT)
Bus Shelters Replacements (NYCT)
Dumpster Enforcement (NYCDOT)
Event Listings (DCA.....and many others)
Lighting Studies (NYCDOT)
Painted Bike Lanes (NYCDOT)
Parking Changes (CB & NYCDOT)
Restriping Crosswalks (NYCDOT)
Sidewalk Improvements on Riverside Drive (DPR/DDC)
Street Closings (NYCDOT + local partner)
Street Tree Planting (DPR)
Subway Station Repairs & Maintenance (MTA)
Temporary Plazas (NYCDOT + local partner)

Long-Term:

138th and 155th Tunnel Painting/Lighting (NYCDOT)
Constructed Bike Lanes (NYCDOT)
NYC Plaza Program (NYCDOT/DSBS + local non-profit partner)
Park Improvements & Expansions (DPR)
Public Art in Stations (MTA)
Sidewalk Widening (NYCDOT)
Street Medians (NYCDOT)

Street Signage (NYCDOT)
Subway Station Rehabilitations (MTA)
Traffic Calming (NYCDOT)
Traffic Flow Changes (NYCDOT)

Top Dozen Projects to Fund

Accident + Traffic Analysis - To determine potential safety counter-measures and, to determine feasibility of new projects that would benefit the community but require changes to streets, like the expansion of Payán Park, relocation of turning lanes to the Henry Hudson Parkway, and renovation of 155th Street.

Area Market Study - To understand the market forces at play including existing market conditions, gentrification pressures, area needs, soft sites, retail profile, and areas for growth. To assist CBs 9 and 12 with planning and development of their goals. To provide a sound basis for decision-making on highest and best uses for the upcoming West Harlem Rezoning.

Broadway Urban Design Guidelines - To help establish a new identity and market presence for Broadway and ensure cohesiveness throughout the neighborhood, especially at sites ripe for new development. They will support TMTTR's new streetscape guidelines and help inform the West Harlem Rezoning.

Community Website - To leverage existing cultural energy and community resources towards common goals, and to launch "Live from 155!/¡En Vivo Desde La 155!" cost-effectively to a wide audience.

Coordination Meetings & TMTTR Presentations - The future value and implementation of TMTTR's recommendations will depend on presentations to obtain funding for the community's priorities and ongoing coordination meetings with other projects in the area.

Enchanted Forest - Return the hillside between 145 and 151st Streets in Riverside Park to a series of sloping lawns with open views to the Hudson. First steps are forestry survey management plan and historic landscape report. Funded by DCR after TMTTR 2005 Concept Plan, but needs matching funds. This would reconnect the neighborhood with the waterfront by opening up views of the Hudson River now blocked by overgrown woods in Riverside Park and recapturing the use of historic existing overlooks along Riverside Drive.

Historic Landmarks & Districts Designation Reports - To research feasibility of proposed new or consolidated historic districts & landmarks, and consensus building for political & community dialogue and support.

Linear Park/Plaza & 155th Street Renovation - Several smaller projects implemented together or separately to upgrade entire block between Broadway and Riverside Drive with new pavements (currently cobble stones), bike routes, signage, banners, pedestrian and facade lights, and art. A new public park/plaza at the Broadway end. Renovation will bring Hamilton Heights and Washington Heights together for large outdoor street events. The linear park has great Hudson River views and will help attract new visitors to Audubon Terrace.

"Live from 155! / ¡En Vivo Desde La 155!" Steering Committee - Composed of major stakeholders around the cultural hub, plus assistance from a consultant/coordinator to help design, produce and market the kickoff event.

Payán Park Renovation and Expansion - New landscaping, paving, benches, neighborhood gathering place right by 157th Street subway entrances and welcome visitors to the cultural hub.

West Harlem/Broadway Business Improvement District - To help the community improve the overall business environment and provide key services, like street cleaning and public safety. A BID will also implement TMTTR's new streetscape guidelines and help market the cultural hub.

Wayfinding & Signage Creative Fee - To create a comprehensive plan for wayfinding and signage providing a coordinated system of identification, directional, interpretive and informational signs, for all users.

West Harlem/Washington Heights Walking Guide - To publicize natural, historic, cultural, retail, and educational destinations with ideas for "great walks" and to let residents and visitors know about - and find - community's many resources. Communicates TMTTR's vision of a pedestrian-focused, commercially-vibrant, and cultural rich community.

PRIORITIES & ACTION PLAN

All of the recommendations and guidelines found in this report are based on a long-term vision for improving transportation, interconnecting resources, and enhancing streetscapes in the communities of West Harlem and southern Washington Heights in a manner supporting their environmental as well as cultural and economic sustainability.

The *Project Summary Report* contains detailed recommendations for improving each of these areas; however, there are key "next steps" that must be taken to enable these projects to move forward, which are described below. These elements are often interdependent. For example, transportation planning for 155th Street and cultural hub is based on the streetscape guidelines and ideas for public art and plazas.

There are many other, related projects happening in these neighborhoods of Manhattan, such as CB9's 197-a Plan and the Riverside and Fort Washington Parks Master Plan, which are discussed near the beginning of Chapter 2.

Transportation Priorities & Action Plan

The proposed improvements to transportation networks help interconnect the commercial corridor on Broadway with the residential neighborhood, recreational facilities in Riverside Park, and natural resources along the Hudson River. They dramatically improve public access to the waterfront. They also improve the environmental quality of the area, for example by improving air quality, and strengthen connections between the area's diverse cultural resources.

Recommendations have been generally discussed with the NYCDOT representative to the PAC and bicycle plans with NYCDOT bike specialists. However, these recommendations cannot be approved without formal study and submission to NYCDOT.

Transportation Key Priority:

The first action required to implement many of the transportation recommendations is an area-wide traffic study and accident analysis. This would allow for the detailed quantitative analysis of existing and proposed future conditions that is typically required by NYCDOT before any street changes can be undertaken. These changes would also typically require the support of, and requests by Community Boards 9 and/or 12 to allow for implementation. Both steps are needed to support the transportation recommendations detailed in Chapter 2-2 of the *Report*.



Transportation Actions:

The key transportation actions recommended fall into the following categories:

- **Pedestrian improvements** - restripe crosswalks, repair existing and install new sidewalks, repair medians, and improve accessibility to lower Riverside Park.
- **Bicycle access improvements** - add new east-west bike routes, install “bike gutters” at all stairways between the upper and lower levels of Riverside Park, install bike racks or covered bicycle parking at key locations, and request additional enforcement of illegal bicycle riding. (See Proposed Bike Access, pg. ES-10.)
- **Public transportation improvements** - consider the needs of older adults and those with special needs by improving the service frequency of buses; repair MTA facilities such as the 135th Street tunnel structure and subway stations at 157th and 145th Streets; and request additional subway station maintenance.
- **Vehicular access** (which requires the prioritized traffic study) - reduce traffic lanes on 145th and 135th Streets to allow for the addition of bike lanes and streetscaping; install traffic calming measures along waterfront access routes; improve 158th/Morgan Place/Riverside Drive and 157th/Morgan Place intersections; and implement appropriate traffic measures on 155th Street to accommodate bike lanes, improve access to cultural institutions and reallocate street space to a new public plaza.
- **Parking improvements** - expedite installation of Muni-meters on Broadway that will increase parking spaces by up to 20 percent; and establish a land use strategy to identify other ways to accommodate parking demands.

(For more information on the transportation planning framework, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 2-2 – Transportation Plan.)

Streetscape Priorities & Action Plan

These streetscape guidelines not only enhance the sense of place and quality of life for everyone in the area, but also support and stimulate the retail environment on Broadway and optimize the pedestrian environment throughout the residential streets and cultural hub. True to the name of the project, the guidelines place special emphasis on public access and view corridors to the waterfront, recreating a bond that existed historically. Conversely, they also “Start the Park at Broadway,” a major community goal.

As summarized below, the streetscape design helps support local identity through urban design, landscape elements, a public art program and an environmental graphics system for wayfinding. In this project area, the focus is on Broadway, the three major crosstown streets (135th, 145th and 155th), and on the primary side streets providing waterfront access from Broadway and Riverside Drive to Riverside Park.

Project recommendations in the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 2-3 describe 1) a streetscape vocabulary for landscaping, sidewalk paving, street furniture and lighting; 2) establish design guidelines for Broadway, Riverside Drive, the crosstown streets, and waterfront access routes; 3) describe special public places like Broadway Malls, Payán Park, Montefiore Park, IS195’s playground, and the proposed linear park for 155th Street; 4) articulate thematic streetscape elements; and 5) recommend approaches to wayfinding and signage.

It is important to note that, in addition to these streetscape guidelines, there are many other planning instruments and regulations that govern New York City’s sidewalk and streets.



Streetscape Key Priority:

To move forward with the implementation of an individual streetscaping project, a topographic survey would be required as a base map for schematic design drawings and specifications. In addition, the streetscape guidelines would be most effective if accompanied by a Master Plan and Urban Design Guidelines that set forth a comprehensive design approach for economic development, open spaces, and future private developments.

Streetscape Actions:

The following **immediate streetscape improvements** are possible through existing organizations with currently available public funding (and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2-3):

- Plant street trees through the MillionTreesNYC program
- Maintain the health and condition of new and existing street trees
- Enhance streetscape plantings through group and individual actions
- Improve street conditions through enforcement of existing regulations, such as lighting, sidewalk maintenance and trash disposal
- Reduce car-dependence by providing enhancements for bicycle users and pedestrians
- Initiate action to reclaim underutilized street space for pedestrian/public use through the new NYCDOT Public Plazas Program
- Explore the feasibility of a farmers' market
- Support the Broadway Mall and Broadway Merchants Associations in efforts to improve the Malls
- Enliven the street with permanent and temporary art installations.

Longer-term capital streetscape improvements can be pursued through

public funding and building support through Community Boards, Local Development Corporations (LDCs), elected officials and government agencies. New streetscape projects that would need a focused effort, as well as community input to initiate, include the following:

- Payán Park: expand and redesign a new park – NYCDOT, DPR.
- Riverside Drive and 155th Street: Improvement of existing plaza – NYCDOT, DPR.
- 155th Street “shortcut” stairs between upper and lower levels – NYCDOT.
- 155th Street – new Linear Park near Broadway – NYCDOT and sponsor organization.
- Riverside Drive and Morgan Place between 155th and 158th Streets: Creation of new medians – NYCDOT.
- Expansion of Broadway Malls by eliminating turn lanes between 156/157th and 157/158th Streets – NYCDOT.
- 135th Street and Broadway: renovate deteriorated sidewalk and structures – MTA and NYCDOT.
- Riverside Park along Riverside Drive: renovate historic structures and restore “The Enchanted Forest” on the slopes of Riverside Park – DPR.
- Riverbank State Park: improve access to elevator and stairs leading to Riverside Park – NYS Parks.
- Montefiore Park: Redesign and expansion – DPR, NYCDOT

Non-standard physical street improvements require an organization which can sponsor, maintain, and fund activities. A Business Improvement District (BID) can provide many services related to streetscapes including:

- General maintenance: street and sidewalk cleaning, graffiti removal, etc.
- Business development: commercial vacancy reduction.
- Public safety enhancements

- Maintenance of special plantings, additional lighting, additional trash pickup, environmental graphics.
- Sponsorship of capital improvements: street lights, trash receptacles, signage, including maintenance agreement with NYCDOT for non-standard items.
- Sponsorship of on-going banner program. Marketing: special events, public relations.
- Sponsorship of private property actions which enliven the street, such as storefront and window lighting to make the sidewalks brighter, and replacing solid gates with more attractive open gates.
- Storefront design and implementation program.

Thematic Streetscape Elements

Thematic streetscape elements were developed for the 1) cultural hub, 2) gateways to the waterfront, and 3) residential neighborhood.

Cultural Hub Theme:

Create a Museum District

The concept behind the streetscapes throughout the cultural hub is to create a larger “museum district” surrounding Audubon Terrace there will be increased landscaping throughout the district to help restore its sense of place as the original estate of John James Audubon. Many streets in this district are curvilinear, reflecting the original topography and streams. The streetscape guidelines for the cultural hub emphasize these natural features as a counterpoint to New York City’s typically rectilinear grid.

Gateways to the Waterfront Theme:

Start the Park at Broadway

There are challenging physical obstacles between the West Harlem/Washington Heights neighborhood and its beautiful waterfront along the majestic Hudson River. TMTR’s 2005 Concept Plan not only recommends ways to overcome these obstacles, but also proposes to bring the waterfront up into the neighborhood. In these

streetscape guidelines this goal - bring the waterfront to the neighborhood - is especially emphasized at key gateways by maximizing view corridors to the River and by creating parklike environments that will, in effect, “Start the Park at Broadway.” (See Gateways to the Waterfront, pg. ES-15.)

Residential Neighborhood Theme: Support Urban Vitality and Diversity

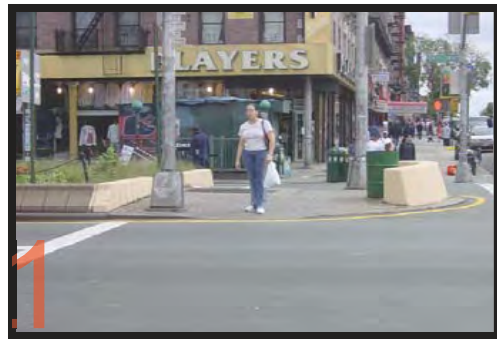
The strength of this community comes from its multi-cultural residents. Many of the cultures represented here have strong relationships with coastal waterfronts, a pattern of active community life that happens on the streets, and of neighborhoods and friendships centered around public plazas and parks. As a result, streetscape guidelines for the residential neighborhood emphasize:

- Wayfinding for newcomers in both English and Spanish
- Framing and opening up waterfront views
- Making the sidewalks more livable
- Encouraging private owners to landscape front yards
- Linking waterfront access routes with upland plazas, community gardens, playgrounds, and parks.

Combined Transportation & Streetscapes

Contained within both the transportation and streetscaping recommendations there are a substantial number of long- and short-term improvements that are summarized in the matrix below (see Phased Approach, pg ES-17). The matrix is divided into short-term steps (within 3 years) on the top and long-term projects (within 3 to 20 years) on the bottom. It is further organized to show what improvements are possible depending on the types of maintenance organizations that are committed to their support.

(For more information and the full Streetscape Guidelines, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 2-3 – Streetscape Guidelines.)



Crossing of Broadway and 145th Street
Bustling, commercial streets and entry to neighborhood via subway



Entrance to Riverbank State Park and Riverside Park (via elevator)



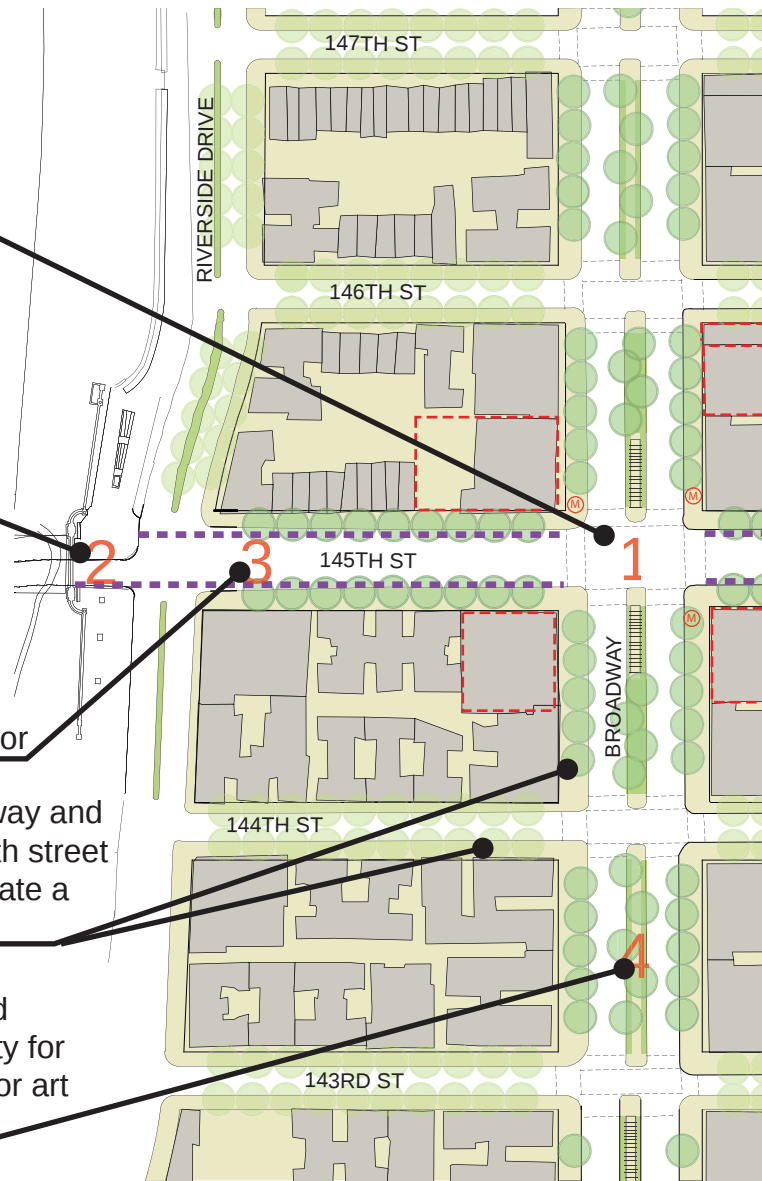
Emphasize View Corridor



Malls with center paved area provide opportunity for socializing; Locations for art installation

Key

- Subway Ventilation Grate
- Subway Station Entry
- Propose Bike Route
- Waterfront Access Route
- Soft Site



145th St. Section with Proposed Bike Lane

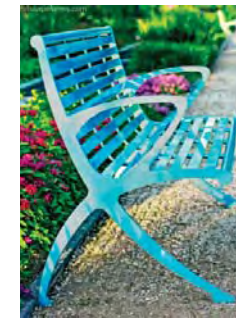
Streetscape Improvements



Location Map



Street Light



Parc Vue Bench



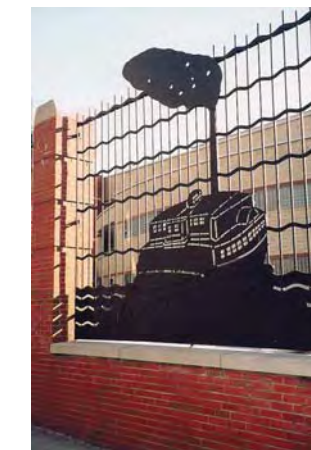
Banners Connecting Broadway to the Waterfront



Bike Rack/ Tree Guard



Art for Broadway Mall Barriers



Decorative Fence PS 24 by Donna Dennis



Pavement Details Compass



Broadway Section



More Uniform + Color Intense Mall Planting

Photos by Nautilus International and EDAAW, Inc



Gateways to the Waterfront Streetscape Features and Graphic Systems



Possibilities depend on maintenance organizations....

short term

Within 3 years

<u>NYC (DOT, etc.)</u>	<u>LDC or BID</u>	<u>+ Non-Profit</u>	<u>Private Owner</u>
street striping sidewalk repair (DDC) painted bike lanes street trees (DPR) parking changes (CB) dumpster enforcement temp public plazas some traffic changes	temporary park sidewalk benches sidewalk planters special lighting bike racks tree grates banners	temp public art park planting (DPR) median planting street events w/ temp. closing	sidewalk cleanup private signage planters on private property
sidewalk widening park improvements & expansions (DPR) street median infrastructure constructed bike lanes tunnel painting/lighting mini-meters traffic control study (for new crosswalks) traffic flow changes traffic calming street signage	special pavements interpretive signage or plaques permanent public art		lighting on buildings

long term

3 to 20 years



Phased Approach

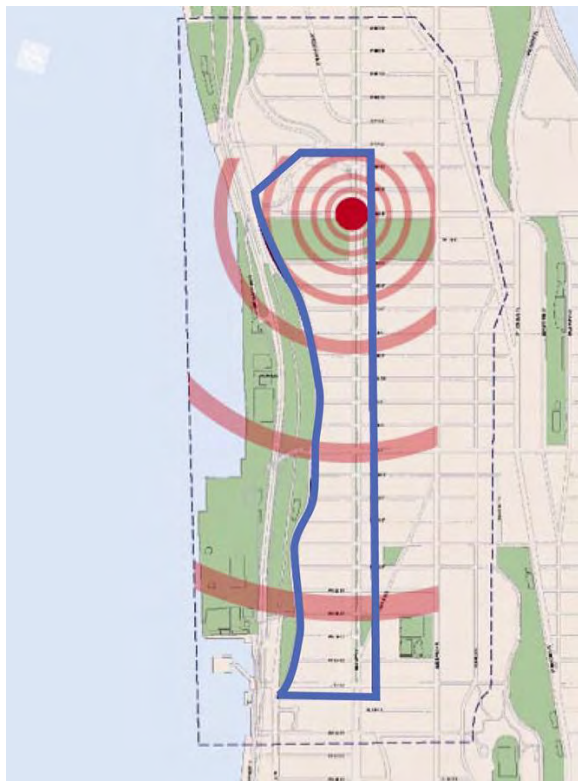
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Cultural Plan Priorities & Action Plan

Increasing the visibility of the underutilized cultural treasures here - from Audubon Terrace to the wide array of historic buildings - will help maximize the impact of these valuable assets for both local residents and visitors. It will also help lay the foundation for their future sustainability and the vibrancy of this important part of the City.

The Cultural Plan provides a summary of recommendations for a cultural hub centered around Audubon Terrace and the West 155th Street “cultural corridor,” including urban design improvements, public art, historic assets, a marketing theme, and communications plan.



The cultural hub will be focused at 155th Street and Broadway and ripple throughout the neighborhoods of West Harlem and Washington Heights. This location provides a major public route to the waterfront with stunning views of the Hudson River (from both Broadway and Riverside Drive), which

unites both Community Boards 9 and 12, and takes advantage of the historic Audubon Terrace as its nucleus.

Despite its wealth of cultural assets, Audubon Terrace (including The Hispanic Society of America, American Academy of Arts & Letters, and Boricua College) is currently isolated from the surrounding urban fabric, making it difficult to discover and enjoy. TMTTR recommends creating a larger “museum district” surrounding Audubon Terrace that transforms it from an isolated complex into an integral part of the urban fabric and community.

The hub broadens out first to include Trinity Cemetery, the Church of the Intercession and other churches along 155th Street, Payán Park just to the north, and the Broadway Malls. Rippling out from there, the cultural district embraces the residential neighborhood to the north, the commercial corridor on Broadway including the #1 subway station at 157th Street, the 155th Street crosstown corridor, and access on 155th under Riverside Drive to both Riverside and Ft. Washington Parks. (See Cultural Hub Plan, pgs ES-20 & 21.)

The identity of the cultural district will be an overlay of the rich history and existing culture of this unique part of the city, as well as a celebration of its origins as the estate of the famous naturalist, John James Audubon. Increased landscaping throughout the district will help restore its sense of place as Audubon's beloved retreat and provide visitors with an immediate perception of its identity as soon as they arrive, whether by subway or the Henry Hudson Parkway (HHP).

The vision is to encircle Audubon Terrace with a softer, more natural setting that re-emphasizes the original streams, hills and country lanes that are still embedded into its curvilinear street patterns, topography, and spectacular views of the Hudson River.

Cultural Hub Key Priority:

Establishing a Steering Committee or organizational nucleus composed of representatives from these cultural stakeholders is the most important first step. The committee can set the agenda and priorities, provide oversight, approach donors, and ensure sound management. Collaboration and consensus are crucial to this effort.

The Steering Committee should consist of the key stakeholders in the area around 155th Street and Broadway, including the main occupants on Audubon Terrace, Church of Our Lady of Esperanza, Trinity Cemetery, and Church of the Intercession. Their visibility, history, mission and varied resources make them the natural leaders of the cultural community. Once the organizations of the Steering Committee are committed to a common goal, they can pool their resources and share expertise.

Among the organizations that the Steering Committee could reach out to include the following: Dance Theatre of Harlem; 125th Street BID; Aaron Davis Hall & The Gatehouse; City College of New York; Columbia University (Miller Theatre, for example), both at Morningside and Manhattanville; and Columbia Presbyterian/Cornell-New York (which have supported Uptown Treasures).

Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA) could serve as an initial umbrella organization for the Steering Committee and act as a catalyst for the cultural hub. Funding for this non-profit organization is primarily being provided by the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) and hosting is being provided by the Hispanic Federation. Governed by a Board of Directors made up of community stakeholders, it also receives input from an Advisory Council of representatives from local arts organization. Its mission is “to cultivate, support and promote the work of

artists and art organization in Northern Manhattan.” Other potential cultural umbrella organizations are the Upper Manhattan Cultural Center (UMCC) and West Harlem Art Fund (WHAF).

There are a number of benefits that a unified organization can offer beyond those available to the individual members, such as greater credibility in fundraising, higher likelihood of attracting sponsorship for events, more clout with public agencies, ability to track progress at the cultural hub over time, wider marketing to diverse audiences, and the ability to accept donations.

All other recommendations for the cultural hub plan will rely on this Steering Committee to bring the plan to life. Recommended actions for the cultural hub and the 155th Street Corridor, which are summarized below, include urban design improvements, temporary structures, façade lighting, wayfinding signage, public art, historic assets, a unified marketing theme, and a communications plan.

Cultural Hub Actions:

Urban design recommendations include physical changes to the cultural hub district such as:

- Upgrade the entrance to the district at 157th Street, with improvements to the #1 subway station, traffic circulation and sidewalks
- Renovate and expand Ilka Tanya Payán Park, possibly including artwork honoring this Dominican actress and AIDS activist.
- New medians on Morgan Place and Riverside Drive to add landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- Improve the 155th Street overlook and tunnel on Riverside Drive to add a skylight, improve the tunnel, and a shortcut stair to the lower level of 155th Street.

Entry point to the area via subway at 157th street. A green corridor directs visitors to the cultural hub.

Reclaim UNUSED AREAS for Public Open Space:

① Expand malls into unused lanes

② Expand Payán Park into striped area + Redesign park

Add medians + reconfigure turning lanes

Expand plaza

③ Renovate 155th St. Overlook, add benches+ landscaping

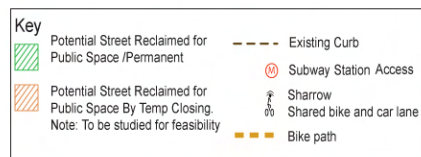
New stairs to lower level

③ Tunnel to park access

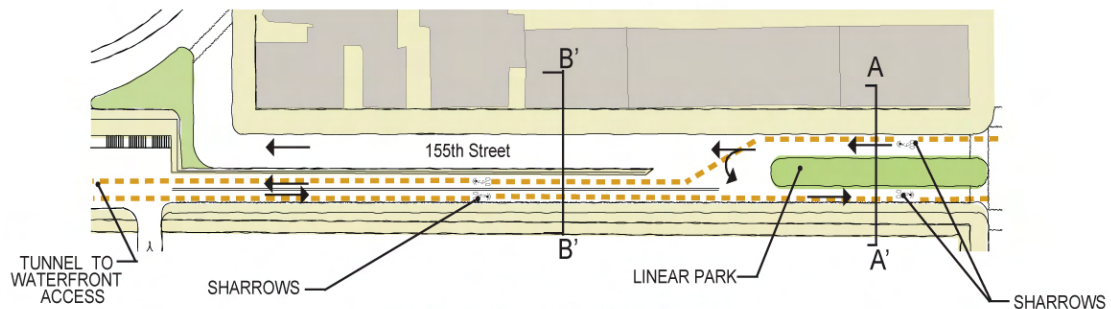
Create inviting access
By cleaning the tunnel
adding lighting or sky lighting.

④ Temporary street closing for large events

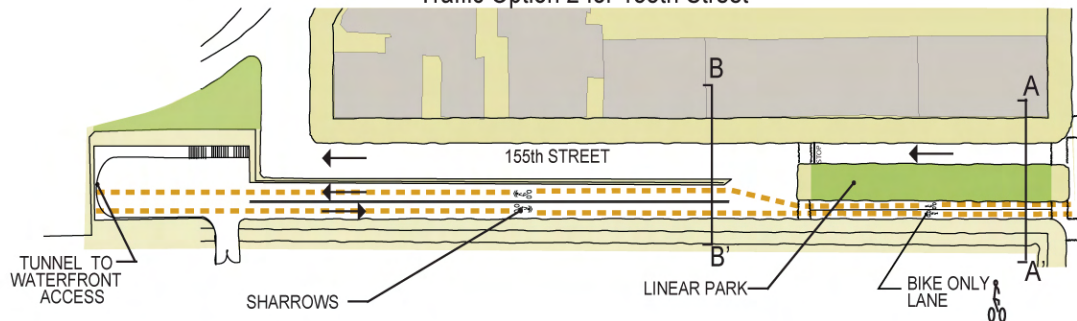
⑤ Create permanent linear park



Traffic Option 1 for 155th Street



Traffic Option 2 for 155th Street





Cultural Hub Plan TAKE ME TO THE RIVER JUNE 2008



- Create a linear park along 155th Street which would provide greater plaza space for passive recreation or for community events, while still maintaining traffic access and some parking.
- Install banners along the upper and lower levels of 155th Street to create visual interest and enhance its perception as a public space.
- Create a cultural hub information center
- Upgrade the “front door” of Audubon Terrace
- Upgrade landscapes on 153rd Street, and the Broadway Mall between 153rd and 155th Streets.
- Create a “Gallery Without Walls” to include public art in the outdoor spaces.

Temporary Structures can be used for various purposes, including performance venues, event spaces, public art exhibitions, or as public art in themselves. With proper programming and local involvement, structures such as tents, shade roofs and food concessions could be used to help create a sense of place at specific locations within the neighborhood. Recommendations for temporary structures within the study area include:

- Explore ways for local organizations to work together to determine appropriate programming and funding possibilities for the creation of temporary structures in public and private locations within the neighborhood.
- Program temporary structures in such a way as to allow engagement of local residents as well as to attract visitors to the area for special events.
- Consider such temporary structures as food kiosks, band shells, farmers’ market stalls, information booths, newsstands, shade structures, exhibition spaces, and tenting structures.



Temporary pavilion at the Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico. Design by Warren Antonio James, Architect, Photo by John Betancourt

Festival and Façade Lighting of specific buildings and/or streets can create a festive atmosphere that transforms a space that might otherwise go unnoticed in the evening and nighttime hours.

Lighting could be used throughout the cultural hub to help define and support its identity as a museum district. This could be achieved with special and consistent lighting for landscape elements, or along the more visible cultural and residential buildings such as those lining Riverside Drive.

Lighting of private buildings would involve the participation of their owners, both for maintenance access and costs of electricity. However, cohesive lighting guidelines could be developed for those zones and private owners could then follow them at their own discretion.



Lighting of BAM emphasizes its architecture.
Photo by H3 Hardy Collaborative

Façade light recommendations include:

- Explore special façade lighting programs to add to the visibility of the historically significant buildings that house the organizations at Audubon Terrace, the Church of the Intercession, and the walls of Trinity Cemetery.
- These organizations should also support lighting of the façades along 155th and 156th Streets, which would reinforce the cultural hub as a major connection to Riverside Drive, Riverside Park and the Hudson River waterfront.
- Expand lighting of the Broadway Malls year-round to increase the visibility of one of the most important physical landscape assets of the neighborhood.

Wayfinding Signage and other graphic systems are important components of the cultural hub. These are important strategies in creating a strong graphic identity to heighten awareness of the cultural hub as a whole. Conceptual ideas were developed to give a “taste” of projects that could dramatically change the image of the cultural hub. Guidelines for wayfinding and signage for the entire project area are described in Chapter 2-3.

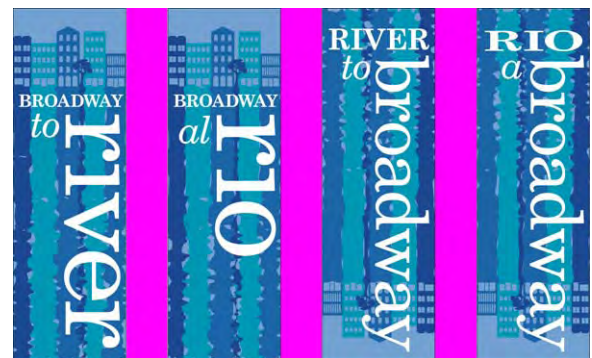
Recommendations include using banners, wayfinding and signage to:

- Show cultural collaboration between stakeholders
- Promote the image of the neighborhood through the idea of the “Live from 155!” “En Vivo desde la 155!” cultural events



Concept for Broadway banners. Design by Studio L'Image, 2008

- Promote waterfront access as a component of neighborhood identity and truly “starting the park at Broadway.”



Concept for waterfront access route banners. Design by Studio L'Image, 2008

- Map the cultural institutions and amenities in the area through visitors' maps and signage



Concept for signs at entrances to public buildings and parks. Photo and design by Studio L'Image, 2008

Public Art opportunities can be found throughout the cultural hub area, although it is important to make the distinction between “public art” and “art in public places.” In simple terms, public art is any work of art or design that is created by an artist specifically to be sited in a public space. Public art can take many forms and include music and the performing arts.

Public art can heighten awareness, question assumptions, transform a landscape, or express community values, and thus can have the power to transform communities. Public art will help define the cultural hub’s community identities and reveal the unique character of their neighborhoods.



Example of Public Art. Photo by Kendal Henry

This report includes detailed public art guidelines to serve as an introduction to what can happen within the project area in the future, as well as how art could be incorporated into many places in the study area. These places include Audubon Terrace’s sculpture court and buildings, subway stations, Ilka Tanya Payán Park, and Broadway Malls. In addition, temporary public art projects can engage the public without the involved process necessary when creating a permanent artwork. Temporary artworks can be created with unusual media and new technology, or installed in unexpected places.

These types of projects may benefit a particular cause; pique public awareness of

an important or timely issue; or simply add momentary beauty to a site.



Example of Public Art. Photo by Kendal Henry

Overall, general recommendations for the West Harlem and Washington Heights communities to implement a public art program are as follows:

- Take advantage of existing programs offered by arts organizations such as the Public Art Fund and Creative Time to begin the process of installing public art projects within the West Harlem/ Washington Heights communities immediately.
- Pool community resources and collaborate - public art by its nature is collaboration between artists, the community, the site, surrounding owners, and the public.
- Work together as funders are most likely to support a unified group, such as NoMAA, than an individual.
- Display existing public artworks of the organizations that are seeking funding and sponsorship. It can be economically beneficial to organizations to display public works.

LEGEND

-  CONTEXT AREA
-  STUDY AREA

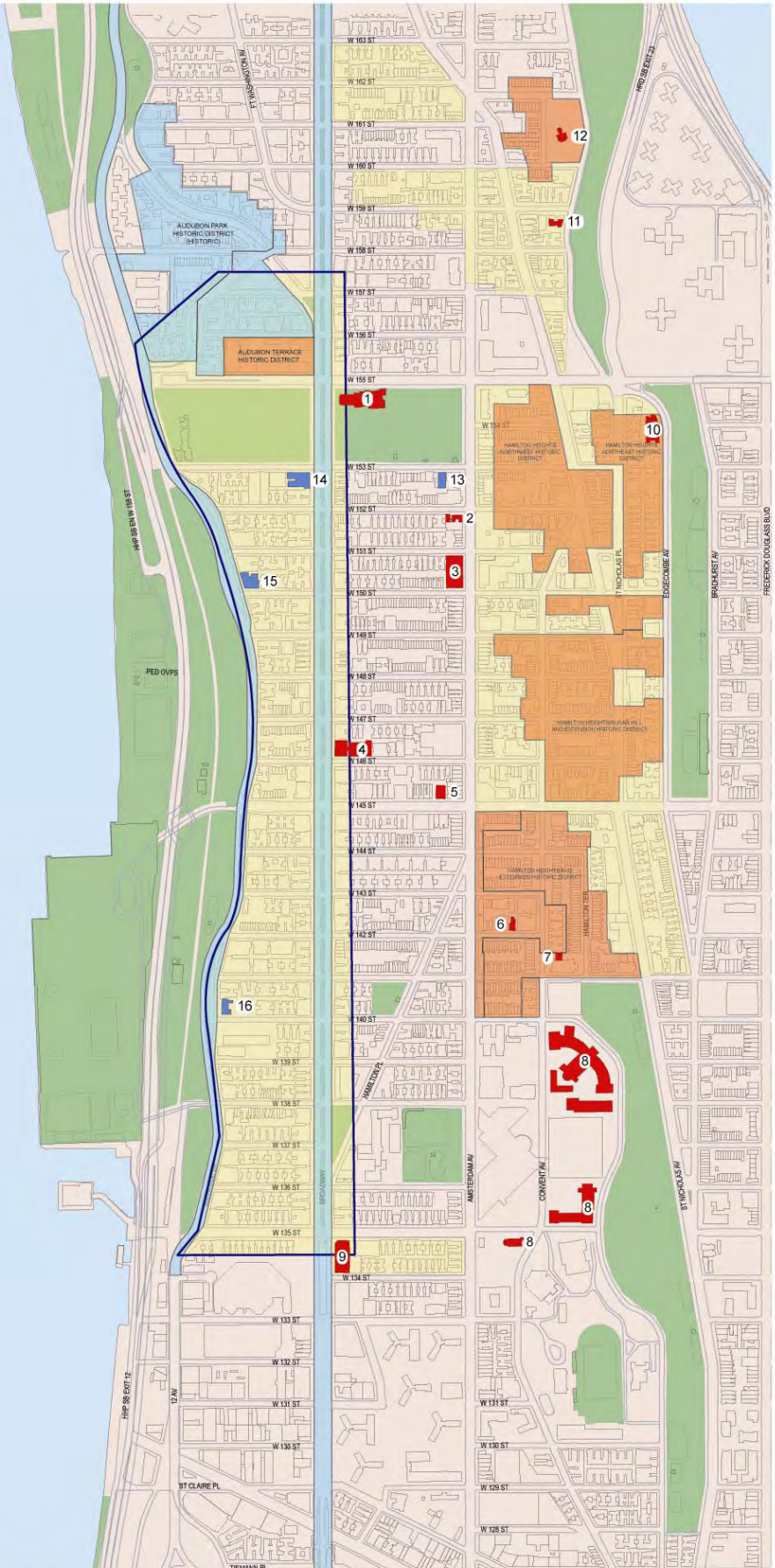
LANDMARK DISTRICTS

-  EXISTING HISTORIC DISTRICT
-  CB PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT
-  CB PROPOSED HISTORIC STUDY AREAS

INDIVIDUAL LANDMARKS

-  EXISTING LANDMARK
-  CB PROPOSED LANDMARK

1. CHURCH OF THE INTECESSION
2. 32nd POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE
3. JOSEPH LOTH & CO. SILK RIBBON MILL
4. HAMILTON THEATRE
5. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, H AMITON GRANGE BRANCH
6. OUR LADY OF LORDES CHURCH
7. HAMILTON GRANGE (RELOCATED)
8. CITY COLLEGE (CUNY)
9. CLAREMONT THEATRE
10. 409 EDGECOMBE AVENUE APARTMENTS
11. 555 EDGECOMBE AVENUE APARTMENTS
12. MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION
13. ST. CATHERINES CHURCH
14. HALIDON COURT
15. 730 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
16. ST. WALBURGAS ACADEMY (630 RIVERSIDE DRIVE)



Landmarks & Historic Districts

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER AUGUST 2008



The **Historic Assets** of the cultural hub area are substantial, and can serve as powerful catalysts for neighborhood regeneration, economic development and neighborhood cohesion. These assets can be leveraged in key ways to articulate historical and cultural connections between the neighborhoods within the study area as well as surrounding neighborhoods in the larger Heights Heritage Area. Actions to be taken regarding historic assets include the following:

- In accordance with CB-9's 197-a Plan, study the feasibility of consolidating the four Hamilton Heights and Sugar Hill historic districts to form a more cohesive and continuous historic district.
- Advance the existing landmarks application for the neighborhood known as Audubon Park (roughly, 155th to 161st Streets between Riverside Drive and Broadway).



Audubon Park proposed historic district. Photo by Nautilus International, 2008

- Initiate multiple studies for the designation of historic districts and individual landmarks within the study area in accordance with CB-12's 197-c Land Use Plan and CB-9's 197-a Plan.
- Investigate further grants and funding opportunities from the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to complete necessary rehabilitation, reconstruction and upgrading of existing historic facilities.
- Improve the condition of Audubon Terrace to allow for public and private

events. The current state of repair of the paving surface and stairs within the terrace is poor, and the lack of ADA accessibility precludes the use of the terrace for public events.

- Develop a secondary entrance to the Audubon Terrace complex from 156th Street.
- Incorporate public art into the design of the NYCDOT proposed reconstruction of the pedestrian bridge at 155th Street which crosses over the Amtrak right-of-way.
- Enhance interpretive opportunities to tell the historical and cultural stories of the area.

Marketing Theme and Communications Plan

A unifying **Marketing Theme** for the cultural hub creates cohesion, builds consensus, and requires collaboration - all important benefits for the community. "Live from 155!/¡En Vivo desde la 155!" or another catchy phrase would bring events of all kinds to the focal point of 155th Street and create a 'live' HUB. This plaza will become known for its celebration of arts and culture. It will reinforce the energy of this neighborhood. Activity will emanate outwards from this hub to include local businesses and other stakeholders.

The theme "Live from 155!/¡En Vivo desde la 155!" is an example of an identity that could be used in all communications for any event or experience in the area, from performance to public art. The launch of such a theme, aiming for high visibility and attraction, could offer several activities in various locations over a weekend: a concert on West 155th Street, a film on Audubon Terrace, and choral or classical music in the Church of the Intercession. Or, it could be staged as a single – but impressive – concert event on 155th Street.

It is important to note that the bigger version is more inclusive for the key stakeholders,

will attract more visitors, and would be much more attractive to sponsors and therefore an easier “sell.” Either way, marketing can be used to involve the community actively in the communication – experiencing it, talking about it, and searching it out – rather than the usual passive “one-way” communication.



Recommendations for creating a unified marketing theme include:

- Establishing a Steering Committee (the **Key Priority**) to determine what the unifying marketing theme will be (“Live from 155! ¡En Vivo desde la 155!” is an example put forward here).
- Facilitating and coordinating cultural events in the neighborhood, and making decisions regarding governance of this collaborative effort, including how to set priorities, choose a launch event and date(s), and conduct outreach to the community, etc.

- Creating a common cultural event as the best and most efficient way to proceed to achieve community goals.
- Hiring a consultant/facilitator to offer guidance on how to manage the disparate factors required to produce and market the event, while balancing community concerns.
- Reaching out for fundraising and sponsorship opportunities.

With the unified marketing theme selected, the next step is to create a **Communications Plan** to market the theme and events to the larger community.



Special event on 155th Street. Rendering by H3

Some of the recommendations for the communications plan include the following:

- Develop a community website (such as www.livefrom155.com). At the introduction stage, offer simple functionality and viewable content (no ‘two way’ interactivity). In the next phase, add benefits to existing site, including greater interactivity - downloadable offerings, upload options, and bonus content such as video and photography, walking tours, and interactive maps.
- Create communications pieces such as interactive posters to provide a multi-media interpretation of conventional printed posters that would provide visitors information on what is happening in the neighborhood, where and when, and to orient them to the surroundings.

Through a touch-screen the user can bring up information and even watch video. The posters are placed in storefronts behind the front window glass and can be installed in a few banks, the library, or other gathering places.

- Other promotional items such as t-shirt advertisements with promotional offers; business/store window decals; and linking the event or events with other organizations' websites in the project area. Web banners could be included on websites for all project partners, steering committee members and other neighborhood organizations.



- Continue the connection between the community and events in the neighborhood by producing an interactive CD-ROM that contains existing video, audio, and photography elements from musicians and artists.

Immediate Steps

In addition to the **Key Priorities** described above, this section contains steps that could

be taken immediately to advance the community's goals for the cultural hub, projects that can undertaken with public funds, and the top dozen projects for which to raise funding.

Steps that could be taken immediately are:

- Initiate a Steering Committee and organizational structure for planning and executive joint cultural events in the community.
- Begin creating an advisory group for the West Harlem/Washington Heights community made up of members of the Community Boards, arts organizations such as WHAF, UMCC, and NoMAA, stakeholders, business leaders, the Broadway Mall Association, and others whose mission is to support each other in the development of public art and culture within the community.
- Complete a facilities assessment and maintenance plan for all organizations at Audubon Terrace (If it has not already been done). This makes it easier to obtain SHPO funding for restoration and repairs to historic structures.
- Begin active communication with Landmarks Preservation Commission to determine feasibility and receptiveness of expanding or declaring new historic district designations as well as next steps in the preparation of Designation Reports and supportive materials. This should be initiated by Community Boards 9 and 12 and would involve consensus building to gain political and community support for the declaration of any new historic districts or expansion of existing ones
- Find local organizations which would be willing to provide programming for "Gallery without Walls," festivals, or public art installations.
- Identify possible locations within the study area for temporary and festival structures. Also identify local organiza-

tions willing to provide programming and activities for such structures, such as the WHAF, UMCC, and NoMAA

- Take advantage of existing program offered by art organizations such as the Public Art Fund and Creative Time to begin the process of planning public art projects within the West Harlem/ Washington Heights community immediately.

(For more information on the cultural planning framework, please see the *Project Summary Report*, Chapter 3 – CulturalPlan.)

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for TMTTR was developed to achieve these goals with the involvement of community stakeholders to influence policy decisions and help guide future incremental implementation projects. The process was led by a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) with a series of four Working Group meetings and a public open house. The PAC was organized and led by the Manhattan Borough President's Office and comprised of representatives from the West Harlem Art Fund, New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, Manhattan Community Boards 9 and 12, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, and NYC Department of Transportation.

The Working Group was comprised of PAC members plus neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, elected officials, public agencies, and other community stakeholders identified by the PAC.

The meetings of the Working Group were designed to solicit input and develop consensus on improvements, amenities and access, including waterfront access routes, circulation, existing uses, impediments and potential design concepts and themes. Working Group meetings were

held monthly on March 6, April 3, June 5, and July 10, 2008

A public open house was conducted at the mid-point of the process on May 1, 2008 to inform the larger community and other stakeholders about the progress of the project and to solicit public input on the draft concepts and design guidelines, cultural planning, and transportation plan.

In addition to the public meetings, the consulting team also met with numerous community stakeholders individually to discuss their issues in more depth.

Input from these meetings was used for and incorporated into all components of TMTTR: transportation planning, streetscape guidelines, and the cultural plan. Listening to the community, reviewing existing community ideas, exploring untapped potential, developing concepts, and working with the community to select the best plans and guidelines formed the basis for the recommended projects.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project team would like to thank all who gave their time and energy to this project. Here is a list of the many entities and people involved in the project:

Project Advisory Committee

The Project Advisory Committee was organized and led by the Manhattan Borough President's Office and comprised of representatives of the following organizations and public agencies:

Manhattan Borough President –
Anthony Borelli, Paimaan Lodhi
**New York State Department of State,
Division of Coastal Resources –**
Nancy Welsh
West Harlem Art Fund –
Savona Bailey-McClain
Manhattan Community Board 9 –
Patricia Jones, Walter South
Manhattan Community Board 12 –
Wayne Benjamin, Manny Velasquez
**New York City Department of Parks &
Recreation –** John Herrold
**New York City Department of
Transportation –** Maurice Bruet

Working Group

The Working Group was organized and led by the Manhattan Borough President's Office. Members included the following:

West Harlem Art Fund (Project Partner)

Office of State Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell
Manhattan Community Board 9
Manhattan Community Board 12
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
NYC Department of Transportation
NYC Transit – Operations Planning
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council

ACTION

Alianza Dominicana
American Academy of Arts & Letters
Boricua College
Broadway Mall Association
Broadway Merchants Association
Church of the Intercession
Community League of the Heights
Dance Theater of Harlem
Friends & Neighbors of 149th Street
Hamilton Heights Homeowners Association
Hamilton Terrace Block Association
Harlem Community Development Corporation
Harlem Valley Heights CDC
Hispanic Society of America
Mirabal Sisters Community and Cultural Center
Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance
Our Lady of Esperanza Church
Riverbank State Park
Riverside Oval Association
Trinity Cemetery
156 Riverside Drive West
706 Tenants Association & other residents

Working Group meetings were generously hosted by Boricua College.

Other Community Stakeholders

Other meetings with individual stakeholder included:

American Academy of Arts & Letters
Boricua College
Broadway Mall Association
Broadway Merchants Association
Church of the Intercession
Community Board 9
Community League of the Heights
Hispanic Society of America
NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation & Stantec
Our Lady of Esperanza Church
Trinity Cemetery
West Harlem Art Fund