

Master Plan for Shoelace Park

on the Bronx River Greenway



February 2010

New York State Department of State

www.nyswaterfronts.com

New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

www.nycparks.org

Bronx River Alliance

www.bronxriver.org

Document prepared by

Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, P.C.

www.mnlandscape.com

Financial support for Shoelace Park Master Plan was provided by the New York State Department of State, Office of Coastal, Local Government & Community Sustainability with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.



Cover Image: Park vision image looking south from area near 229th Street.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following individuals were instrumental in the development of this document.
Thank you all for your contributions.

Fred Landa, Coastal Resources Specialist, New York State Department of State

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner

Hector Aponte, Bronx Borough Commissioner

James Mituzas, Design Supervisor of the Bronx

Tricia Vanderbuk, Deputy of Operations

Joseph Gobin, District Manager, Bronx District 14

Linda R. Cox, Maggie Scott Greenfield and the Bronx River Alliance staff

Marit Larson and Ferdie Yau, Natural Resources Group

MATHEWS NIELSEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, P.C.

Kim Mathews, Principal-in-charge

Ryan Kovac, Project Manager

Michael Cluer, B Chatfield, Terrie Gamble, Chris Hardy, Victoria Ip, Lee Jennings

Liz Campbell Kelly, Rachel Kunreuther, Greg Leonard, Jennifer Low, Johanna Phelps

WhatWorks Inc., website design

Hank Stroobants, Volunteer 'Archivist' extraordinaire

The Learning Tree School, Bronx, New York

Bronx Lab School, Bronx, New York

Bronx School of Science and Technology, Bronx, New York

Community Board 12, Bronx, New York

CONTENTS

- iv Letter from the New York State Department of State
- iv Letter from the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
- v Letter from the Bronx River Alliance

OVERVIEW

- 2 Master Plan Vision
- 3 History of Stewardship and Degradation along the Bronx River
- 4 Purpose of Master Plan
- 5 Planning Principles
- 5 Sustainable Objectives

PROCESS

- 8-9 Community Outreach and Participatory Design

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 12 Natural History
- 12 Pre-Colonial Period
- 12 Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries
- 13-14 Nineteenth Century
- 15-16 Early Twentieth Century
- 17-18 Mid to Late Twentieth Century: The Creation of Shoelace Park
- 18 Twenty-first Century

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- 22 Bronx River Greenway
- 23 Community Overview
- 24-26 Program and Recreational Resources
- 27 Circulation
- 28-29 Visual Qualities
- 30 Topography and Soils
- 30 River Environment
- 31 Stormwater Runoff and Erosion
- 31 River Channel Restoration
- 32-33 Floodplain Resource Management
- 34-35 Vegetation

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 38-39 Introduction
- 40-41 Master Plan Diagram
- 42-47 Program Strategies
- 48-53 Circulation
- 54-57 Stormwater and Floodplain Resource Management
- 58-59 Vegetation Management and Restoration
- 60-62 Phasing and Implementation
- 63 Recommendations Overview
- 64 Additional Resources

New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources



Across New York State, communities are using the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, the expertise of the Department of State and funding from the Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to create and implement their waterfront vision. New York City has the distinction of having the first Waterfront Revitalization Program approved by the New York State Department of State, and we are pleased to be a partner over the past 28 years as the City worked to reconnect its residents to their waterfront.

The Master Plan for the redevelopment of Shoelace Park and Fort Knox Park on the Bronx River is a great example of a locally-driven strategy that results in environmentally sound public recreation destinations. The plan will serve as a comprehensive guide for park development that implements principles and policies of the New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program. Implementation of the plan will strengthen connections with the surrounding neighborhoods, enhance visual and physical access to the river, and protect river water quality.

We look forward to working with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the Bronx River Alliance and its many partners in implementing the vision established for this important stretch of the Bronx River Greenway.

George Stafford
Deputy Secretary of State

New York City Department of Parks & Recreation



We are delighted to share with you the plan for Shoelace Park and Fort Knox Park. These existing parks are key links in the developing Bronx River Greenway, a continuous stretch of parkland that will one day run from the river's source at the Kensico Dam to its mouth in the South Bronx. The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation is pleased to be the prime public partner on this project, working with the Bronx River Alliance and with dozens of Community Boards, local and regional non-profits, elected officials and other agencies on planning and implementing this exciting project that will transform the heart of the Bronx.

New York City is on the verge of a great transformation of its waterfronts, opening up hundreds of miles of shoreline—including along the City's only remaining freshwater river, the Bronx River—for recreation and enjoyment. At the same time, we are developing miles of new bicycle and pedestrian paths to encourage New Yorkers to get active and out of their cars. This plan represents our best thinking on how to revitalize existing parkland to meet the public's 21st century expectations for what public parkland can be, while also achieving the smaller-scale objectives—a new playground, better exercise equipment, better lighting—that can mean so much to local residents.

Thanks to the Bronx River Alliance, a public-private partnership with NYC Parks, for leading the effort to restore the Bronx River and develop the Bronx River Greenway along its length in New York City. I would also like to thank the New York State Department of State Environmental Protection Fund for providing the financial resources and technical assistance to make this plan possible.

Adrian Benepe
Commissioner, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

The Bronx River Alliance



We New Yorkers are looking at the Bronx River with fresh eyes, envisioning it as an ecological, economic, recreational, and educational resource for Bronx communities and the greater New York City region. This plan focuses on a key one-and-a-half-mile stretch of riverfront parkland in the North Bronx - Shoelace Park and Fort Knox Park - building on the *Bronx River Greenway Plan* we released in 2005.

While I hope that you will take the time to view the plan holistically, I want to draw your attention to three elements of which we are particularly proud:

Our community approach – For decades, efforts to restore the Bronx River and develop the Bronx River Greenway have been grounded by the role community groups and elected officials have played in speaking up for and taking action on the river. In developing this plan, we heard from community members via a Youth Design Team, two community design workshops, a website survey, community board presentations and nearly a half-dozen other community gatherings and meetings. This plan represents the latest community vision on what the Bronx River Greenway can be and how it can serve multiple objectives including sports and river viewing, historical interpretation and ecological revitalization.

Ecological approach – The key asset of the Bronx River Greenway is the river itself. This plan protects and restores the river through thoughtful attention to the way water flows in the park—in the river itself, overflowing its banks in floods, and as stormwater sheeting off streets and down steep slopes into the river. The plan successfully integrates the steps necessary to protect and restore the river with those steps that will also enhance public enjoyment of the park.

Historic interpretation – from hunting grounds, to industrial corridor, home to recreational trails, a literary scene and tapestry weaving, the Bronx River corridor has seen it all! In this plan we peel away the layers of history that have taken place along this one-and-a-half-mile stretch and integrate them into design details for the park.

We are so pleased to have worked with a fabulous consultant team at Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects on this plan and particularly thank Ryan Kovac and Kim Mathews for their hard work and dedication to this project.

See you at the river,

Linda R. Cox

Executive Director, Bronx River Alliance
Bronx River Administrator, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation