

# THE WAGNER PLANNER

Newsletter of the NYU Urban Planning Student Association



August 2008

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## BRIDGEPORT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

by Hugh Bailey (MUP '08)

**D**ecades in the making, the city of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is finally advancing on a long-planned, \$1.5 billion economic development project known as Steel Point. The project will dwarf everything else in the city, or even the region. On a spit of land in Long Island Sound south of Interstate 95, the city has signed a deal with a development team to build 3,500 luxury condos, in addition to stores, restaurants, a marina, a hotel, a wrap-around boardwalk and more. Bridgeport is counting on the project to finally put the city back on the map.

**"Whether there is a market for luxury condominiums in a city that to this point has had little to offer out-of-towners remains an open question."**

It's been especially tough going lately in Connecticut's largest city. Known as "The Park City" because of its acres of green space, including two major attractions designed by the legendary landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Bridgeport has seen declining manufacturing, a skyrocketing tax rate and a growing reputation for crime, drugs and poverty. Situated on Connecticut's Gold Coast, near some of the wealthiest towns in the country, Bridgeport has endured a seemingly unending downward spiral.

Bridgeport has also gained infamy for another unwelcome trait — corruption. A former mayor and ex-state senator are serving prison terms over unrelated graft schemes. It's been one more obstacle for a city with no shortage of them.

Steel Point itself has been in the spotlight for more than a generation. Long before *Kelo vs. New London* enshrined the rights of municipalities to use eminent domain for the purpose of economic development, the city seized dozens of

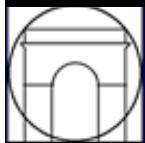
homes and businesses there, mostly from low-income residents, for the purpose of a project that would revitalize the city. After at least two iterations fell through over the years,

Bridgeport signed a deal with Midtown Equities of New York in November 2007 to put together the megadeal. In the interim, the city negotiated with the local electric utility and a longstanding yacht club on the peninsula to complete the 52-acre site.

While having a signed deal in hand marks significant progress, there still remain crucial hurdles. For instance, due to a clause in the Land Disposition Agreement, the city won't reap any benefits in real es-

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Urban Planning Anytime at: <http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/urbanplanning>



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All currently enrolled MUP students, alumni and faculty are encouraged to submit material to *The Wagner Planner*. Please email letters to the editors and any other contributions to: [wagnerplanner@gmail.com](mailto:wagnerplanner@gmail.com)



## A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The form and function of cities is an ever evolving state - physical growth and shrinkage can occur smoothly or catastrophically depending on how they are managed. Like medieval fiefdoms or modern-day nations, borders within and around cities are constantly redrawn. No true city is frozen in time. Like a living organism, cities are a growing child, an aging relative, a feast of new beginnings and historic precedence.

History even influences developments that seem to crystallize out of sheer nothingness, like mirages, in the middle of greenfields. New suburban subdivisions may illustrate this best by retaining the memory of what was lost through marketing strategies with names like "Peach Orchard" or "Green Fields." Wagner planners usually deal with city matters within an intricate context of physical reality and emotional desire, where opinions can be splintered about what should exist in place of what does.

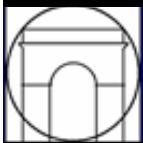
The future of industrial land in former rust belt cities in the U.S. has been a recent cause of friction. Under the Bloomberg Administration in NYC, for instance, industrial land has been shrinking to accommodate other uses. Some of the land, such as along the waterfront, was underutilized for decades. It has been transformed recently into verdant public space and housing. However, as the boundaries of industrial zones are reshaped to make way for commercial and residential uses, there is a cost. Industrial companies, which on average pay better wages to low-skilled workers than other types of firms, are forced to leave the city or even the country.

A contentious battle has been unfolding over the soul of Willets Point, Queens — a swath of industrial land bound by highways on all sides. The Bloomberg Administration has expressed an interest in rezoning the land to make way for a residential and entertainment attraction. Current industrial business owners contest that the Mayor is shortsighted in his desire to remake the area. Meanwhile, redevelopment of the waterfront in Bridgeport, Connecticut has been awaited by citizens with bated breath. A proposal to turn underutilized industrial land into a mixed-use master planned community promises to be an economic stimulant for the city. At least that's what the citizens of Bridgeport hope.

Megadevelopments in cities are dreamed up for neighborhoods that are economically depressed, at times without consultation from the local citizenry. Minority communities are often at the center of these types of large scale urban plans, which is the case in Bridgeport. Having planners on staff who reflect the face of a community should be paramount to meeting the challenges of the changing urban fabric in the U.S. Communities of color often shoulder megadevelopment plans, yet people of color are a minority in the planning profession. How cities accept diversity—whether racial, economic or cultural—will influence future urban form and function.

The articles in this summer edition of *The Wagner Planner* deal with these issues in addition to congestion mitigation, public space planning and other themes.

Michael Kodransky (MUP '08) and Theresa B. Do (MUP '09)



AUGUST 2008

## KEEPING INDUSTRIAL JOBS IN NEW YORK CITY

by Michael Freedman-Schnapp (MUP '09)

**N**ew York City was once the capital of East Coast manufacturing, with almost a million production jobs in 1950, and now has none, right?

Wrong. The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) reports there are 223,000 blue-collar industrial jobs in New York City today that employ a diverse range of people in making goods such as high-end apparel, ethnic foods, building products and a widening array of transportation positions. Manufacturing jobs pay \$48,000 annually on average, compared to \$34,000 in retail and \$23,000 in restaurants—sectors that are destinations for many foreign-born workers and people of color who have low levels of formal education or language barriers. Average manufacturing wages also have increased 8% since 2001 in real terms, according to NYSDOL, while wages in comparable sectors have stagnated or shrank.

Moreover, these jobs are producing custom-designed, high-value-added products that benefit from the agglomeration economies of New York. It seems unbelievable, but airplane-deicing components are made in a loft building above the Film Forum; one of the mirrors for the Hubble Space Telescope was made in East Williamsburg. These firms are located in New York for a number of reasons: their small size keeps them tied to the residential choices of their owners, and their investment in skilled workers lasts for many years. Most importantly, they desire proximity to their main market: New York City. These economic forces have led hundreds of new industrial companies to start up over the past

decade in such growing sectors as specialty food, TV/film set design, custom furniture, green building products, and high-end art moving crates.

Yet despite this vitality, the cost of space and a shrinking supply of land are slowly killing the industrial sector. Repeated surveying by the organization I have worked for since



Steel workers in New York City.

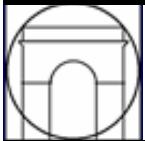
2004, the New York Industrial Retention Network (NYIRN), shows that real estate costs consistently rank just behind labor and raw material costs, and just ahead of energy costs. Manufacturing firms currently need to rent space in the \$6-12 per square foot range, but prices in the outer borough industrial neighborhoods have doubled to as much as \$15 or \$18. Illegal residential conversions, as-of-right conversions to office and retail space, speculation, and rezoning of manufacturing land have all shrunk the supply of land available for companies. A conservative calculation using City tax lot data shows that since 2001, about 35-40 million square feet of industrial space has been rezoned or will

be rezoned by the Bloomberg administration (not including as-of-right conversions to office space and approved residential zoning variances). There is about 250 million total square feet of industrial space in New York City, representing a significant chunk of manufacturing-zoned land.

In recent years, a concerted group of advocates—including the Pratt Center for Community Development, the Municipal Arts Society (MAS), a number of local development corporations, and NYIRN have coalesced around a set of policy and zoning tools needed to preserve land for blue-collar jobs. Beginning with a 2001 comprehensive report by MAS and Pratt titled *Making It In New York*, these advocates have proposed a number of new zoning and policy tools to update the city's approach to saving these jobs: protected manufacturing areas where superstores, hotels, and large offices (currently as-of-right in most M-zoned areas) are restricted from locating; reforming the variance process; imposing impact fees on the conversion of manufacturing space; restricting residential conversions in mixed-use areas; and cutting companies' energy costs using conservation measures and renewable energy technology.

As noted above, the Bloomberg Administration has shepherded through a number of rezonings—in Greenpoint/Williamsburg, Long Island City, West Chelsea, Hudson Square, Jamaica, and the Columbia University expansion—that dramatically reduced the amount of space available for manufacturing companies.

*(Continued on pg. 8)*



AUGUST 2008

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS RESTREPO

by Alex Blei (MUP '08)

**C**arlos Restrepo is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Policy at Wagner. Before coming to NYU, he worked for three years in El Salvador as a policy analyst for FUSADES, a non-profit organization, and in environmental, energy, science and technology policy studies and telecommunications. He teaches the Sustainable Cities course.

**AB:** You are a research scientist at the Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems (ICIS). Could you describe what ICIS does and some of the work you are currently involved in?

**CR:** ICIS is a multidisciplinary institute currently working in two broad areas. First, we look at the environmental aspects of infrastructure systems - The South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy project is an example. It looks at transportation, air quality and public health. Second, we look at infrastructure and security. In that area we're working on several projects funded by the US Dept of Homeland Security. We've looked at the electric power sector and oil and natural gas pipeline systems across the US.

**AB:** When did you move from El Salvador to the United States? Was it an easy decision?

**CR:** I've gone back and forth a number of times, mostly having to do with my education. I did my undergrad here. Then I went back to work in El Salvador. Then I came back here again for an NYU grad program. I've been working as a research scientist at NYU for ten years. I'm here because of my academic research interests and my desire to gain more experience with these issues in the US.

**AB:** Looking to the future, do you plan to return to El Salvador?

**CR:** At some point, yes. My whole family is still there. I would like more experience working outside El Salvador and then going back. El Salvador has a number of environmental issues in the near- and long-term. Infrastructure issues, for example. Clean drinking water and wastewater treatment needs to be extended to the ma-

jority of the population. Wastewater treatment is in its infancy stages. There is high coverage for clean drinking water in urban areas, but low coverage in rural areas.

**AB:** Your Sustainable Cities course runs the gamut of issues related to the health and well being of cities. If you could single out one sustainability issue as particularly important for New York City, what would it be?



**CR:** Hard to answer. Perhaps buildings and the built environment in addressing social sustainability. Where disadvantaged people live, for instance. In terms of how New York affects the region and beyond, buildings have a big impact on energy consumption and the city's carbon footprint.

**AB:** If you weren't in academia what would you be doing?

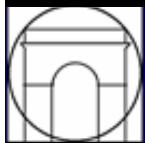
**CR:** Working on environmental policy issues in a research think tank or a government agency in El Salvador.

**AB:** Do you believe the United Nations, World Bank and other international organizations have been effective in working toward sustainable policies and practices? Where has there been success and where has there been failure and why?

**CR:** You have to look at it on a case-by-case basis rather than the success or failure of institutions. The World Bank has made a lot of mistakes from a sustainable point of view by funding large infrastructure projects that weren't very successful. Later on, though, they've been very active in developing sustainable economic policies from an academic point of view. Depending on what department you look at the World Bank, you're likely to see success and failure. The UN has been successful in getting countries to talk about and debate the planet (global climate change) and the most recent example is the climate change talk in Bali on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. This is very likely to be a huge challenge, but at least they've brought everyone together to talk about these issues.

**AB:** Is there an innovative technology, policy, or practice you would like to see more of?

*(Continued on pg. 5)*



## LATINOS ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE PLANNING PROFESSION

by Jessica Sanclemente (MUP '08)

**S**urveying the urban planning field, I find that Latinos and African Americans are highly underrepresented in this profession, particularly in the private sector. Latino's make up 22% of the population, but only 6% of planners. African Americans make up roughly 19% of the population, but only 10% of planners. Whites, however, are overrepresented with 49% of the population and 73% of planners.

According to the *Guide to Planning Education* by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, only 6% of students in New York State, New Jersey and the eastern part of Pennsylvania are Latino, while 70% are white. Many private firms seek to increase diversity only for marketing purposes—to attract contracts in communities of color.

### Carlos Restrepo

*Continued from p. 4*

**CR:** One very interesting area that will be talked about a lot in the next few years is the issue of whether we should use a tax on carbon or tradable permits in the U.S. The debate on those issues may spark policy developments in the US.

**AB:** Has living in New York changed your understanding of urban issues?

**CR:** Certainly. You look at a place like New York and you think that because of its sheer size it must have a host of environmental issues.

But when you look at New York on a per capita basis, you realize the impact of an individual living in a dense urban environment is less than the impact of an individual living in a suburban setting. ■

In Leonardo Vasquez's article *Diversity in the Planning Profession*, he states that some planners of color members have been working very hard feel that they are given certain projects because of their ethnicity and are not put on other projects that might be more challenging. Vasquez points to this fact as a reason why more planners of color are not in management positions.

There is also a large disconnect between how many communities are planned and the wants and needs of the affected community. Too often, planners do not have an understanding of the particular characteristics within a community or its unique needs. This is often true in the Latino community due to issues of language, legal status, culture and the current climate of immigration policy. Bridging this disconnect is especially challenging in a community as complex as the Latino community. For example, Washington Heights is an area with the youngest Latino population; while the South Bronx has a sector of Honduran people who belong to the only Afro-Honduran community; East Harlem has some of the most impressive Latino artists including the muralist De La Vega; and, Brooklyn is the home of a large Panamanian population.

There are, however, many grassroots organizations in New York City that work with the Latino community on issues of gentrification, waterfront access, green building and community development that are not connected with the traditional planning world. Some of these organizations include FUREE, Uprose, CAAAV, The Point, and the Harlem Tenant Association. Organizations such as these are essential to bridging the gap between planning and the Latino community.

These are the organizations that speak to the needs of the community

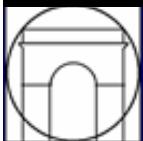
because they are the community. On the political side, two City Council members have been working very hard on the issue of gentrification: Rosie Mendez from the Lower East Side; and Melissa Mark Viverito from East Harlem. Adolfo Carrion, the Bronx Borough President who also has an Urban Planning degree from Hunter College, has been working hard on the Hunts Points waterfront project.

Despite the efforts of these groups and politicians, the Latino community still does not know much about the planning profession. Many people of color simply don't know it exists. One reason for this is that the lack of Latino professionals becoming mentors or being active in the effort to diversify the planning field.

As a Latina, I would like to be in an environment where my ideas and politics aren't a rarity. I don't want to be the token person of color, used to work on projects solely based in Latino and immigrant communities. In light of these challenges, the APA NY Metro Chapter has identified several strategies to diversify the industry, namely:

- Create mentoring programs for seasoned planners to help younger planners;
- Develop joint programming between APA and other organizations that have a larger percentage of minority professionals;
- Provide entrepreneurship and business training for minority planners to help them become, and succeed as, managers and leaders;

*(Continued on pg. 10)*



## KHEEL PLAN ENVISIONS FREE MASS TRANSIT IN NYC

by Dan A. Doyle (MUP '08)

**K**heel's big idea just won't go away. Ted Kheel, a 93 year-old labor lawyer, hopes New Yorkers will one day close ranks behind his NYC Free Transit and Congestion Pricing Plan. He knows this won't be easy: few people will entertain such grand plans. Yet there is no shortage of growls when it comes to the traffic faced here. On that note, New Yorkers should give Kheel's proposal more than a first blush. Many will like what they see - a hard-nosed plan that will keep New York City moving ahead. If city leaders give it a chance, they'll be trading in rush hour gridlock for a transit grail.

For city planners, efficiency and proximity are the cornerstones of urban advantage over other places. However, when the city overcrowds, people, vehicles, and ideas no longer move freely, and this competitive edge is lost. Congestion in NYC amounts to \$13 billion in economic loss every year, to say nothing of the pollution-related social costs. Get workers circulating faster - on mass transit, bicycles, and sidewalks - and efficiency springs ahead again.

The Kheel plan will seduce New Yorkers out of their cars and onto subways and buses by eliminating fares. These lost revenues will be recovered and then some through a 24-hour, \$16 toll on cars and \$32 for trucks, amongst a host of other auto-deterrant measures. Estimates show that vehicle travel times in the Central Business District will be slashed by 34 percent, funneling \$4 billion in increased productivity back into the city.

NYC mayor and business magnate Michael Bloomberg has stated "free public transit is good public policy." The Kheel plan makes this belief possible while also advancing PlaNYC's goals. It provides a comprehensive

answer to a chronic problem that will otherwise worsen as the city becomes home to another million people by 2030.

Despite free mass transit, a study by the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility calculates that more frequent service will reduce transit's crowding during rush hour by four percent. PlaNYC provides the bedrock principles affirming Kheel's forward-

commitment to gin up public transportation in the region must include better ferry service. The cheapest infrastructure is that which already exists; there is no cheaper artery in and out of NYC than our open waters.

Kheel Plan skeptics and agnostics must think beyond the bumper (to bumper). Would New Yorkers like their buses to zip along faster and farther with more express routes? Might they trade in their road rage for a nimble bicycle? Could "ceasehorn" be a salve for battered eardrums? Of course, congestion has become such a staple of NYC that few can imagine otherwise. But possibility doesn't end at convention. Rather, it re-imagines standard practice.

Cities were on the march long before the advent of the automobile. If there is any place that can survive and thrive *without* cars it is cities. In fact, the automobile drove many of NY's finest away. This won't change until more city streetscapes become the places where people want to roam and relax. Further, the Kheel Plan, by speeding traffic flows, will soothe hostile drivers - those best at chasing pedestrians indoors, or away altogether. Over the past century, scores of people have fled stifling and overcrowded cities for fresher air and less congestion. On this account, tailpipes from idling cars are an assault on outdoor city life. Fast tracking travel through public transport would give surrounding space more integrity and reduce private procession.

Most Americans spend 90% of their time indoors. A more civilized transportation plan can help restore a felicity sought outside.

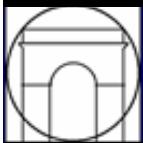


Peak hour traffic in Manhattan  
Source: [www.hoursesthink.com](http://www.hoursesthink.com)

looking plan, which offers an alternative for reoccurring fare hikes. Most importantly, these benefits will be shared by millions, rather than be a windfall for the fortunate few.

For longer routes, rail, bus, and ferry service must be ramped up. By virtue of its geography, entry into Manhattan can be maddening for transportation planners. The bounds of an island don't allow for streamlined commutes. Yet this alleged weakness can be a great asset as well. Waterways could potentially float part of NYC's transit economy. Any

*(Continued on pg. 10)*



AUGUST 2008

## FURMAN CENTER FIELD TRIP TO WILLETS POINT IN QUEENS

by Peter Feroe (MUP '09)

You may wonder what planners and real estate researchers do for fun. It's simple - we set out to learn first-hand about a neighborhood and the development plans that the City has in store for it. So last February, the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, including the raucous staff of PlanNYC.org, had its first ever "Furman Fun Day." Led by Prof. Vicki Been and Prof. Ingrid Ellen, dozens of Furmaners descended on the New York City Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) Lower Manhattan headquarters to hear first hand what plans are in store for the Willets Point neighborhood in Queens. Thanks to PlanNYC.org, we had read a lot about Willets Point; but we were after a real-time experience that would give us a better understanding of the controversies and challenges involved with this project.

With a population of 1 (yes, someone really does live there), Willets Point is an industrial neighborhood that is to the east of Shea stadium and the new Citi Field, to the south of Northern Blvd, to the west of the Van Wyck and Flushing River, and the north of Flushing Park. The neighborhood, also known as the Iron Triangle, is notable to take the land through eminent do-

for its lack of paved streets and lack of sewers. That's right - the City has not extended sewer service to the 13 block area and so the businesses in the neighborhood have cesspools.

Huddled around a large conference table, the Furmaners listened intently as project managers and public relations specialists from EDC outlined their plans

for the area. Broadly speaking, EDC

wants to buy all of the land in Willets Point and sell it to a single developer (yet to be chosen) who would invest about \$3 billion to turn the area into a mixed use neighborhood that would contain a large hotel and conference center, retail and commercial space,

and thousands of apartments. Before any of that happens, EDC wants the developer to remediate the environmental contamination in the neighborhood and raise the entire site a few feet to bring it out of the 100 year flood plain. Here is the real hitch - if EDC is not able to buy the land voluntarily, it appears prepared

to take the land through eminent domain. They consider the area to be 'blighted' and believe the use of eminent domain is appropriate to remedy the blight.

To gain a truly comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding the development, we boarded a bus and ventured into the neighborhood. Upon first sight, it appeared to be a place that time forgot. There were dirt roads with potholes as big as a car, junk yards, chop shops, and stray dogs. Once there, we met fellow Wag-



A typical unpaved street in Willets Point.

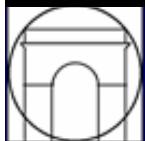
ner student Laura Imperiale, who represents the largest land owners in Willets Point. Laura introduced us to two business owners who have been in Willets Point for decades. These business owners are adamantly opposed to EDC's vision for Willets Point, especially the City's consideration of eminent domain. While touring their facilities, a large baked goods distribution center and a steel manufacturing and construction facility, we saw first hand that parts of Willets Point are actually thriving. About 1,300 workers come to work in Willets Point each day to work in a variety of industries. Many of these businesses benefit from their proximity to major transportation corridors which allow them easy access to markets in Long Island, Manhattan, New Jersey, and upstate New York.

These business owners argue that any blight in the area is a direct result of City actions and inactions. In particular, they fault the City for not maintaining the streets or extending sewer service to the area. They also fault the City for not enforcing the building codes. Many auto related businesses, legal and otherwise (chop shops), have opened in Willets Point on land leased by absentee landlords. These businesses employ an estimated 1,000



Pedestrian tries to cross a street full of sludge.

*(Continued on pg. 9)*



## Industrial Retention

Continued from p. 3

Several more, including Willets Point, Gowanus, and South Williamsburg are on the horizon. Yet city administration has not entirely failed its blue-collar constituents. It implemented a non-zoning version of the industrial protection areas—by promising not to rezone those areas for residential use while leaving major hotel and retail loopholes in the zoning code. It created the Mayor's Office of Industrial and Manufacturing Businesses, which serves as a central point of contact for industrial issues. And the Economic Development Corporation is looking closely at proposals to preserve the high-end fashion production uses that remain in the Garment Center and to seed the growth of local green manufacturers.

With a net loss of 56,000 jobs since 2001, according to NYS Department of Labor data, the industrial sector seems like a lost cause. Some, notably the Manhattan Institute, have argued that the City would be better off letting these jobs go and redeveloping all land for its highest and best use. This attitude is all too common and reflects a serious disconnect from blue-collar work in much of our society—the Manhattan Institutes of yes-



An industrial sector employee handles a special light fixture.

Map 1: Overview of North Brooklyn Waterfront Neighborhood & Landmarks



Basemap: DOITT/NYC DCP 2005; NYCTA 2004

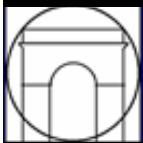
### Additional Links

More information about industrial retention proposals is available here:  
<http://www.zoningforjobs.org>

Watch a video about installing a solar panel on a factory:  
<http://www.nyirn.org/bluegoesgreen>

Read the *Making It in New York* report:  
<http://www.prattcenter.net/pol-mluzi.php>

teryear would have argued for more industrial space. The last two decades have shown that this mode of real estate-driven economic development has a steep price of inequality and stagnation at the bottom of the labor market. If we let all industrial firms go to New Jersey or Pennsylvania (which are far more frequent destinations for our higher value-added manufacturing firms than China or Mexico), or out of business entirely, we will not lose a piece of the past, we will lose a chance to build an equitable future. ■



## STUDENTS HELP JAN GAHL WITH PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY

Contributed by Alice Walkup (MUP '09), Nupur Chaudhury (MUP '09) and Erin Longbothum (MUP '09)

For two days in October, several NYU Wagner students participated in a "public life survey" of New York City. The NYC Department of Transportation hired Jan Gehl, renowned Danish architect and designer of *Urban Quality Consultants* in Copenhagen, to examine New York's streets and roads in all five boroughs. Through a collection of data on people and activities occurring in public spaces, Gehl has helped to transform some of the world's most livable cities, such as his hometown, Copenhagen, and Melbourne, Australia. In the survey, NYC DOT explained that they were interested in looking at pedestrian counts (counting how many people pass by a certain location within a given time), age and gender of users, stationary activities, and other activities taking place in public spaces.

Most of the surveyors were urban planning and design students from NYU, Columbia, New School, Hunter and Pratt. Each volunteer had a 6-hour shift to complete pedestrian counts on various streets throughout the city, but the students were not given letters or any confirmation that they were working with the DOT. This proved to be a problem for Nupur Chaudhury, who was slated to do pedestrian counts by Penn Station on 7th Avenue. Having no identification from the organizations she was working with and given instructions not to answer any questions while counting pedestrians lead to quite a scene.

Erin Longbothum, spent her 6 hours counting pedestrians on and around Flatbush Avenue near the Atlantic Center Terminal in Brooklyn. Fortunately, it was a rather uneventful afternoon - other than potential heat exhaustion and a touch of boredom Ms. Longbothum escaped unscathed. Erin recommended that anyone volunteering for such surveys in the future bring an iPod.

For Alice Walkup, who is not from New York City, the Public Life survey afforded her an opportunity to appreciate the city's diversity. She rotated between two sites near Madison Square Park and enjoyed some of her time observing a "street ballet" that would have made Jane Jacobs proud.

Part of the draw to volunteer for the Public Life Survey was the opportunity to meet with and hear Jan Gehl speak. However, conflicting location details on the invitation led to confusion about where to go in downtown Manhattan, and as a result, several volunteers never made it to the talk.

For those who persevered and found the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor conference room in the Whitehall Ferry Terminal, meeting and hearing Jan Gehl was an enlightening experience. He showed case studies of cities that have been transformed to be not only sustainable, but also beautiful. While the results of the New York City Public Life Survey were not disclosed at the talk (Gehl had not yet discussed them with the Mayor), the audience did get a glimpse of some possible changes to the City. He spoke about having cars share space with bikes and people, rather than allowing cars to take over the entire street.

He also talked about the 1994 work he did in Melbourne to improve public spaces there and the results observed ten years later. In the intervening time, many evaluators have recognized Melbourne as a very livable place. Gehl also shared some interesting facts about street activity, for instance: kids play 9.5 minutes in the street, before wanting to move on to some other activity.

In all, both the pedestrian counts and the talk with Jan Gehl provided an opportunity to learn more about New York City today and what it might be-

come in the future. Perhaps in a few years, current NYU Wagner planners will be the ones implementing the changes that result from the DOT's Public Life Survey. ■

### Willets Point

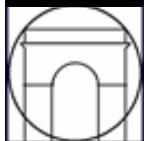
*Continued from p. 7*

workers, many of whom are immigrants.

By not enforcing the building codes, some business owners believe that the City has directly caused any blighted conditions that exist in Willets Point. While they agree with the City that blight should be remedied, they believe the best way to do that would be to extend City services to the area and enforce building codes - not seize their land through eminent domain.

After hearing all of this, the Furmaners were hungry for more. So, we boarded the adventure bus once again and headed to *Spicy and Tasty* to discuss the matter in more detail over lunch. Unfortunately, despite the wealth of intellect and planning acumen that were assembled, we were not able to *solve* the problem of Willets Point. We remain vexed about the best ways to foster economic development, remediate environmental contamination, and protect private property rights and existing businesses. We will, however, continue to follow the project, mainly through its extensive coverage on PlanNYC.org, in hopes of gaining a more thorough understanding of the details of the project and complicated planning issues that are involved. We invite you to do the same. ■

For the latest updates on the Willets Point Development, visit:  
<http://plannyc.org/project-24-Willets-Point-Development>



## Bridgeport

*Continued from p. 1*

to finance infrastructure improvements. While the developer, and not the city, is responsible for payment on the bonds if the project fails to meet its goals, the clause removes one of the plan's top selling points to a skeptical public — that the increased tax revenue could offset one of the highest mill rates in the region. Then there's the recovering but still problematic reputation the city

tate taxes for many years. Instead, that revenue will be diverted to pay off bonds

carries within Connecticut. Whether there is a market for luxury condominiums in a city that to this point has had little to offer out-of-towners remains an open question. The project is in the city's tough East End, not its more gentrified Black Rock section to the west. It could be a challenge to bring people into the neighborhood while ensuring the development can be incorporated with the surrounding neighborhood. A walled-off retreat on the water would defeat the purpose of restoring city pride to a battered community. ■



Source: Midtown Equities, Managing Partner of Bridgeport Landing Development LLC [www.steelpointharbor.com](http://www.steelpointharbor.com)

## Kheel Plan

*Continued from p. 6*

Once this is found in the public realm, not just the confined yard, urban flight can reverse. For many, ditching their car in favor of mass transit is a backwards concept. Then again, progress isn't always what it seems. It often deserves a closer look. Just think: in 2008, under the reign of the automobile, the average speed of crosstown traffic is roughly 6 mph. In 1911, in the heyday of horses, traffic speeds were 11 mph. With its plan to scale down auto use in Manhattan, The Kheel Plan will turn New York City's subways and buses into a stal-lion fleet.

Dare our city leaders to redefine progress - demand it's in the public interest. ■

## Latinos in Planning

*Continued from p. 5*

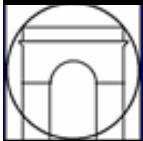
- Allow minority planners within organizations to influence staff development and project assignments;
- Increase the number of senior-level planners in the private sector;
- Increase the number of scholarships to minorities interested in planning schools;
- Create a "unified effort among planning schools and employers" to diversify the profession;
- Make the profession better known in minority communities, which will attract more young people to the profession;

• Make minority planners more visible to students and young people; and,

• Conduct more research into diversity issues, including a comparison of regions and a more detailed investigation of the experiences of various planners.

In addition, the NY Metro Chapter has a "Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee." The committee works to increase diversity within the profession as well as provide opportunities to network, share ideas and collaborate.

NYC Metro also produced a report that provides further information on diversity in planning entitled: *Lagging Behind: Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession in the APA New York Metro Chapter Area.* ■



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## PLANNERS AT WORK AND PLAY



Students in Rick Landman's Land Use Regulation class



Planners enjoying time off



Planners Brian Ross and Alex Blei at BAM Convocation



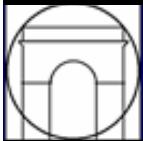
Holly Haff's Urban Waterfront Planning class gathered together on the Jersey City promenade



UPSA Happy Hour



More planners at UPSA Happy Hour



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## MORE PLANNERS AT WORK AND PLAY



Planners Patrick McCandless and Nupur Chaudhury



Wagner students are all smiles after exams are done



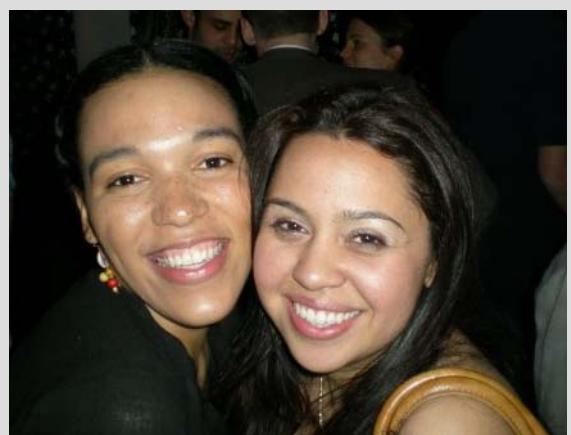
Planning students unwind with karaoke outside of class



David Quart gives his Urban Economics class a tour of the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal



Commencement ceremony at Yankee Stadium



Planners Andrea Perkins and Jennifer Lozano at Dysorientation