

**BOROUGH** Brooklyn

**MAP ID#** B5

**COUNCIL DISTRICT** 37

**COMMUNITY BOARD** 4

**NAME OF PLAN**

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**Community Organization** Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council

**Address** 217 Wyckoff Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11237

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**TYPE OF PLAN**

Environmental Restoration Plan

**GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PLAN**

The former Rheingold brewery site in West Bushwick is a 6.7-acre City-owned brownfield site with potential to satisfy much needed community services. The site is divided into two areas intersected by Bushwick Avenue, a major thoroughfare in Brooklyn.

**NEIGHBORHOOD/PLAN BACKGROUND**

A community in north-central Brooklyn, NY, Bushwick was once known as "the center for American beer brewing" and home to the famous Rheingold Beer Brewery. The growth of the brewing industry sparked the construction of new homes and churches in the neighborhood as well as a diverse business sector, some of which are still prominent features of today's landscape, and created a vibrant community where people lived and worked.

After World War II, Bushwick, like many other commercial centers, underwent a period of transformation--brewery plants consolidated and relocated and other manufacturing activities closed down leaving behind vacant buildings. Through the 1960's and 70's, the neighborhood continued to experience a period of decline--residents moved away, stores closed down and the housing stock deteriorated.

West Bushwick holds exciting opportunities and the potential to become the center of a revitalized community. The community has put much effort over the years to improve surrounding conditions--a large number of abandoned buildings have been rehabilitated, and through the City of New York's urban renewal program and community partnerships, new housing has been developed.

**GOALS OF PLAN**

1. Replace a blighted derelict site with development that will increase the economic base of the City.
2. Provide a center for a revitalized community and will become a focal point for the residents of Bushwick, who have worked diligently to preserve and improve their neighborhood.
3. Be economically efficient being a location well served by public transportation and surrounded by community landmarks such as civic and educational institutions.
4. Be a model for sustainable brownfield redevelopment in New York City.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The design concept that emerged is a product of consensus and reflects the community's desire for action. It is a first step and a practical approach in implementing a vision for the Rheingold site.

### **Green Space:**

This idea demonstrates that green infrastructure can recreate physical and visual connections with the neighborhood and serve as the "transition element" between different uses. The interesting topography of the site helped to determine the plan's open space hierarchy. The site's highest point, near the intersection of Bushwick Avenue and Melrose Street, was selected as the best location for the project's main public plaza considering its commanding view of the entire site and the Manhattan skyline. The community facility uses contemplated for this intersection will frame the public plaza. The concept also includes green areas designed to serve as buffers between the mix-use/mid-rise buildings proposed along Bushwick Avenue and the two-family homes proposed on the "interior" of the site. Each cluster of homes will have private green space for resident's use. Group parking with dense landscaping was proposed along Stanwix Street in order to create a buffer between the new residential buildings and the existing industrial structures.

### **Housing:**

The housing program was determined by four main objectives:

- provide the maximum number of units while assuring diversity and a pleasant environment
- provide affordable housing for a wide range of income groups
- provide a mix of housing (size, tenure, type) suitable for persons with varied lifestyles
- maximize the use of HPD's existing, and successful, housing programs

The design concept resulted in 170 residential units (rental and ownership) located in the proposed mixed-use/mid-rise buildings; 120 two and three-family homes (ownership); and approximately 30 condominiums in the style of townhouses (ownership).

The proposed multifamily buildings, which will range from six-story elevator buildings at the higher points of the site, to four-story garden apartment buildings at the lower portion, will be located along Bushwick Avenue. These structures will create a sort of housing wall between the Avenue and the enclave of smaller two and three-family homes on the side streets that will be closed to through traffic. The smaller homes will have pitched roofs that become part of the buildings' facade.

### **Commercial Space and Community Facilities:**

Approximately 50,000 sq. ft. of commercial space was incorporated in the design concept. Space for neighborhood retail stores was provided on the ground floor of the multi-story buildings planned along Bushwick Avenue. A small supermarket (approximately 9,000 sq. ft.) with on-site parking was planned on the smaller portion of the site. Responding to the need for an intergenerational community facility, the design concept included a 30,000 sq. ft. facility with a day-care center and multipurpose rooms. The community center will occupy the first two floors of a mid-rise building that will have a distinct facade treatment.

## **IDENTIFIED STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The design concept requires many public actions before approval. Once approval is obtained, the plan will be developed in phases. The implementation strategy mapped out during the workshop described the public review process and identified several financing mechanisms that could be used to develop the different phases of the plan.

Workshop participants proposed the creation of a task force that will help to advance the project through the public review process. The task force will include members of City agencies, the New York City Housing Partnership and Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council.

Federal, State, and City subsidies will be utilized in a manner that leverages private financing to the greatest extent possible. State and City subsidies will fill the gap between the cost of developing the townhouses and the sale price, which will be affordable to target home buyers. Similarly, for rental units, low interest loans from the City will be combined with bank loans so that the debt service burden on the buildings can be covered by rents affordable to the target population.

At the close of the workshop, City officials and partners emphasized their commitment to implementation. It is expected that the first phase of the project will begin November 2001. This phase involves the construction of the first group of two and three-story family homes by the New York City Housing Partnership. It is expected that by the end of 2002, new owners could start moving into the homes. While the first homes are under construction, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) would begin working on the implementation of the second phase, which includes the construction of the first multifamily buildings.

### **PARTICIPATORY PROCESS**

As part of the City's ongoing effort to revitalize and advance economic development initiatives in the Bushwick neighborhood, an international design workshop was organized by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust's International Brownfield Exchange Program and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) in association with the Ridgewood Senior Citizens Council (RBSCC).

This workshop, held October 18-20, 2000, brought together architects and urban planners from Germany, Northern Ireland and Canada with experience in transforming brownfield sites into new uses, with local community leaders, elected officials, city staff and professionals in the redevelopment field. It provided an opportunity to share international experiences and best practices, to participate in creating ideas and principles to guide redevelopment, and to establish consensus regarding future objectives and design options for the former Rheingold Brewery site

### **PARTNERS**

Waterfront Regeneration Trust's International Brownfield Exchange Program, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council (RBSCC), Assemblyman Vito J. Lopez, Veronica White, COO of the New York City Partnership & Chamber of Commerce

### **OBSTACLES N/A**

### **TIMELINE**

**INITIAL IDEA** 2000      **FORMAL PLAN?** Yes      **DATE SUBMITTED** 2001

### **SUBMITTED TO**

Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)

### **CITY ACTION?**

HPD is implementing the plan

### **MODIFICATIONS MADE TO PLAN** N/A

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** N/A