

Online- Offshore

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News and Stories from Governors Island

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Action Alert: Design Competition Public Forum June 20th.

Record Turnout for Family Festival on Opening Day

The summer season kicked off with the Alliance's Family Festival on June 2nd. Some 2,300 people explored the Island on bicycles (for the first time) and on foot to participate in the day's activities. You can see all the action at <http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/go-to-governors-island>.

The day started with an FDNY fireboat water show, jugglers, and serenades by the Two

Man Gentleman Band to greet the crowds. Children (and their parents) were also entertained by songs by the Mercantillers and the Hudson River Ramblers, a special appearance by Herman Melville, and a performance by Literally Alive Children's Theater. A "Design Your Dream Park" table led by the City Lore, Hester Street Collaborative, and the Alliance let kids add their input to the design competition for parks and open spaces. This scavenger hunt will be available all summer long. Some of the standout ideas from Saturday's workshop included the world's biggest slide, pony rides and George, a green island mascot standing 7

feet tall.

5 Imaginative Visions for Governors Island

The five finalists in the competition to design the Island's open spaces have submitted a rich variety of concepts. Will the seawall be opened to create tidal pools? Swimming beaches? Free wooden bikes to borrow? Rocky hills for kids to scramble up? An imposing ferry landing? Lighting to make the Island visible from shore? Wind turbines? A "five-star" private retreat on the waterfront? Community gardens? Overnight camping?

Those are just a few of the ideas that leap out from the presentations on view at the Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Place (two blocks south of Washington Square), and on the Island in the building immediately to the right as you get off the ferry. The June 4 issue of New York magazine also has a summary article with a few illustrations.

The design teams were asked to let their imaginations roam free, and they responded with five unique perspectives, each quite different from the others. Now GIPEC wants public comment. **The teams will present their work and hear public reaction at a public forum on June 20 (6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Fashion Institute of Technology's Reeves Great Hall, entrance at West 28th St and 7th Avenue).** If you cannot make the meeting you can put your opinion in writing at the exhibit locations on the Island or at the Center for Architecture, or

For the full schedule of public events, please visit
www.governorsislandalliance.com/pdf/OnlineOffshorevol2_3.pdf.



online at www.park-centeroftheworld.org.

The Alliance is offering two special evening walking tours of the Island that will highlight the Island's important open space features and design team responses. The tours are June 21st and 27th from 5 – 7 p.m. For more information and to RSVP (required), visit www.governorsislandalliance.org.

A jury of eight specialists (see names below) will recommend one or more teams in July. GIPEC will make the final choice by the end of the summer. The winner will receive the contract to prepare the plan for the park and public spaces, a process that will take another year. While the winning team will surely start from the vision presented at the competition, the final plan could be a combination of ideas from all five teams.

What follows, in no particular order, is a summary of the five teams' proposals, with highlights of some of their ideas:

→ Tidal pools are the most striking element of a design titled **"Mollusk"** by the team of Field Operations/WilkinsonEyre Architects of New York and London. The pools would be created by the ebb and flow of the harbor tides through opening the seawall at the southern end. The promenade would ride over the water on stilts when the tide is high. This plan rests on a natural landscape for the most part, emphasizing exposure to the weather and the harbor. Other special features include a deck and swimming pool on Buttermilk Channel, thermal pools with warm water that would extend the swimming season, and "mistifiers" to create a foggy forest transition between the northern and southern halves of the Island.

→ The team of Hargreaves Associates and Michael Maltzan Architecture Inc., of New York and Los Angeles focuses on the perimeter: "The park's central feature is the **Great Promenade Necklace.**" The path would glow underfoot at night, break away from the shore at the southern end, widen at one point for a shoreline amphitheater, and spiral at another point into a marine ecology center. The team's "Beach and Dunescape" is at the southern tip, where the promenade wraps around a large swimming area. The Hargreaves team also allocated the most room for active ballfields, with large playing fields that stretch to the waterfront. A smaller theater would be located on the parade ground (glacis) in the northern historic district. On the northern historic shoreline the team proposes lighting and structures -- including a formidable arrivals building -- that would be noticeable from Manhattan.

→ A team of Philadelphia, New York and Toronto talents -- WRT LLC/Weiss/ Manfredi/ Urban Strategies, Inc. -- describes its design as "a new frontier, a return to the city's waters." It proposes **"nesting,"** a series of distinct



landscape and play areas in the southern sector of the Island, building hills for climbing, sledding (!) and star-gazing along with a tidal channel from which canoes and kayaks could have access to the harbor. It offers theme gardens in the open space bracketed by the wings of Liggett Hall, and azalea gardens between Fort Jay and Castle Williams. Reaching outside the concept of public space, this team would carve out the southernmost tip of the Island for a “five-star” private retreat – “a craggy forested earth-building with a spa.” It says that this could fund “construction of a landform that would significantly enrich the experience of the South esplanade.”

→ The New York and Paris design team of Ramus Ella Architects (REX) and Michael Desvigne Paysagistes (MDP) declares up front that “This is not a landscape proposal. This is a development strategy.” They propose to concentrate “the users and the limited financial resources of Governors Island toward its perimeter... creating an animated loop.... No longer a treadmill with great views but weak social interaction, the Great Promenade becomes a continuous stretch of piazzas....” The Island’s interior is cast as a grid of 55-foot squares, initially given to wetlands and farm grasses, the **grid matrix** would permit the park and development to evolve over time. This is also the only proposal to put the beach and swimming pool on the harbor side, with a dramatic view of the Statue of Liberty.

→ A team with its feet in Rotterdam and New York -- West 8/Rogers Marvel Architects/Diller Scofidio + Renfro -- proposes a **“World Park”** with 3,000 wooden bicycles and 3,000 wooden armchairs. A canal across the Island would include a ferry drop-off at Liggett Hall. But the most striking feature is a series of dramatic near-vertical hills as tall as 180 feet which could shelter such things as an art gallery or a climate research institute. Other features include stepped hillside seating for an amphitheater and a “green-themed” hotel and spa. Like some other teams, they advocate self-sustaining energy from solar and wind power, self-sustaining water supply from storm runoff and reusable grey water.

The Jury on Open Space Design

The jury that will advise GIPEC on the selection of a design team for the Island’s open spaces will be meeting with each of the teams, one-by-one, in June. They are to recommend one team, or a combination of teams. GIPEC plans to make the final selection by the end of summer, and then to proceed to contract.

The eight jury members include the state and city parks commissioners, a former New York City planning commissioner, the president of GIPEC, two architects and the heads of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Detroit and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In alpha-



betical order, they are:

Carol Ash – Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, as well as the State Historic Preservation Officer. She was previously executive director of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

Adrian Benepe – Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. His parks department career has included directorship of Natural Resources & Horticulture and directorship of Arts & Antiquities.

Leslie Koch – President of the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC), appointed last year by Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Pataki. She was previously Chief Executive Officer of the non-profit Fund for Public Schools.

Reed Kroloff – Director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum in Detroit. He was previously editor-in-chief of Architecture Magazine.

Karen Brooks Hopkins – President of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where she has worked for more than 25 years. She is a mem-

ber of the board of NYC & Company (the city’s tourist and convention bureau) and the board of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership.

Laurie Olin – A principal of the Olin Partnership, a landscape architecture firm. He is Practice Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania and Chairman of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Gregg Pasquarelli – Co-founder of the SHoP Architects firm. He was Eero Saarinen visiting professor at the Yale University School of Architecture last fall, and Shure Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia in 2003.

Joseph Rose – Partner in The Georgetown Company, a privately held real estate development firm. He was chairman of the New York City Planning Commission and Director of the Department of City Planning for eight years under Mayor Giuliani.