

AN EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AT JACOB RIIS PARK  
GATEWAY NATIONAL PARK, NEW YORK CITY

by

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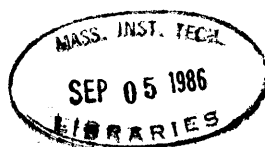
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on  
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ABSTRACT

Jacob Riis Park, a part of Gateway National Recreation Area, is currently the subject of a Request For Proposals for the purposes of restoration and development. The park which sits astride the Rockaway Peninsula at the entrance to New York Harbor presents several obstacles. Although located only 25 miles from Midtown Manhattan, the site has historically been much further away in the minds of New Yorkers. This attitude will be demonstrated in a series of interviews with city officials, community board members and members of the business community in the Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. This paper will discuss this psychological barrier as well as the tangible traffic, weather, and demographic objections to development at a site which is thought suitable only for seasonal use. By drawing on this series of interviews a possible mixed use project will be outlined as a best use for the site. This use will then be tested for economic viability and remedies for revenue shortfalls proposed. The study concludes that there are possible solutions to the development of the park. The National Park Service should move cautiously to that end.

Thesis Supervisor: James McKellar

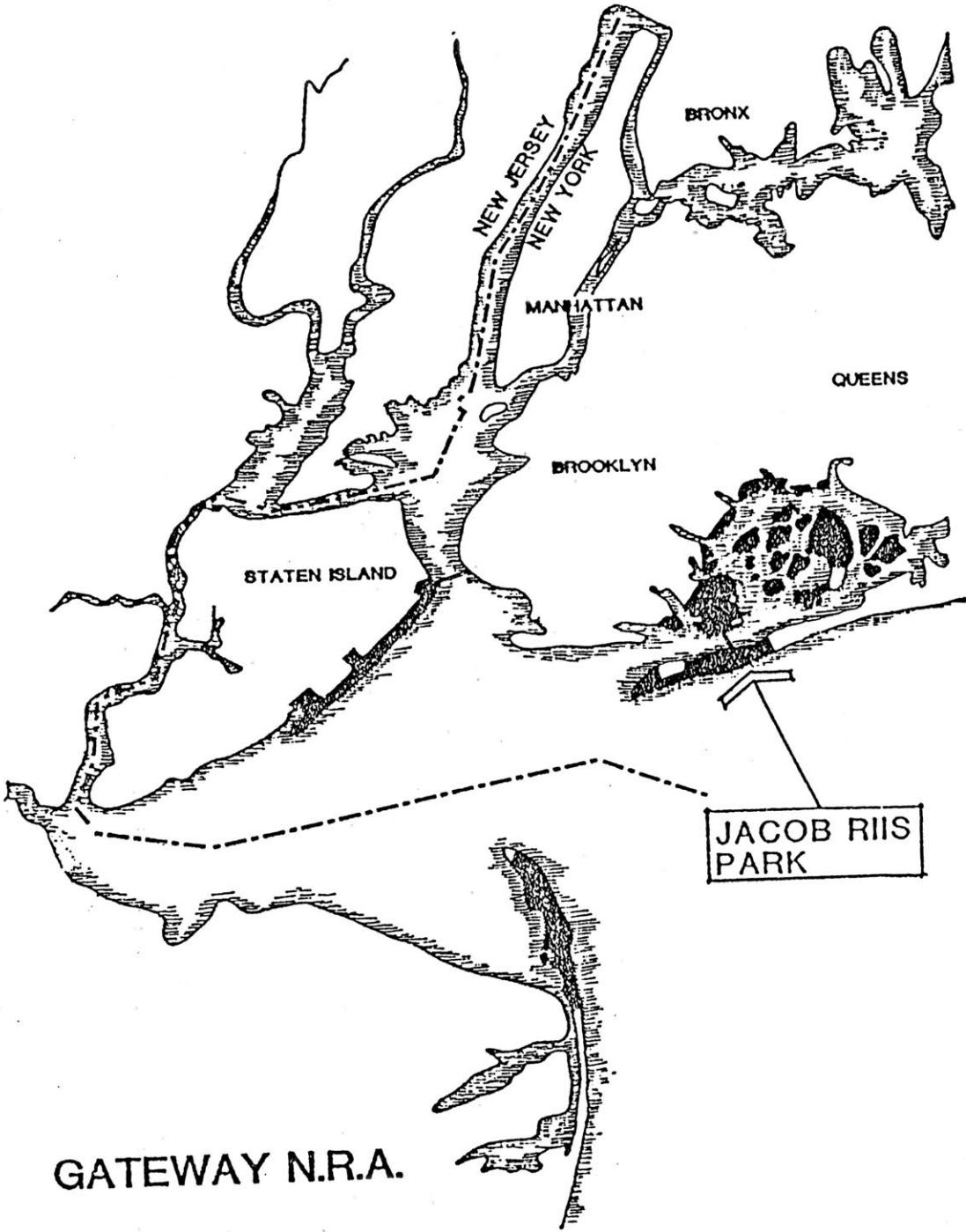
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## INTRODUCTION

A challenge has been presented to private developers in New York City by the United States Department of the Interior. An excerpt from a Request for Proposals for Jacob Riis Park follows: " The National Park Service is currently offering the development community an opportunity to submit proposals for reuse and rehabilitation of facilities at Jacob Riis Park, a part of Gateway National Recreation Area. Jacob Riis Park sits astride the Rockaway Peninsula at the entrance to New York Harbor. The park and its bathhouse look southward across the Atlantic Ocean, and northward across Jamaica Bay to the Manhattan skyline.

The 400-acre park contains one mile of oceanfront beach and boardwalk, a bathhouse containing approximately 113,000 square feet, extensive sports facilities, and a 9,700-car parking lot ( the largest parking facility in the world when built in 1937).

The development opportunity is to rehabilitate facilities at the park through creative reuse, and to maximize the recreational possibilities afforded by the property. It is significant as a relatively unaltered, publicly planned municipal recreation complex of the early 20th century. The bathhouse is an example of the Art Deco style of building architecture, characterized by streamlined geometric shapes and occasional polychrome patterns."



GATEWAY N.R.A.

JACOB RIIS  
PARK

STATEN ISLAND

BROOKLYN

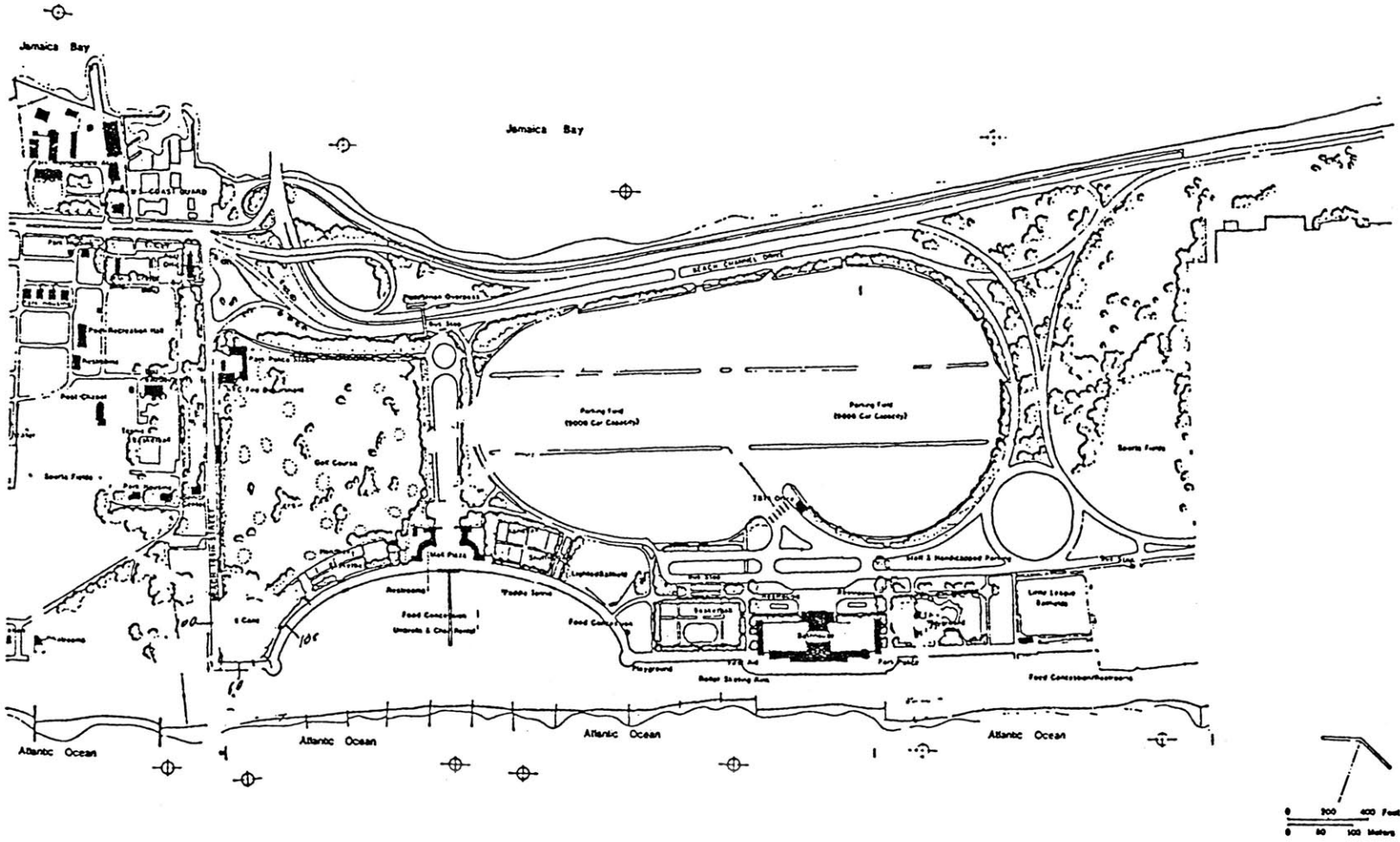
QUEENS

MANHATTAN

BRONX

NEW JERSEY  
NEW YORK

# JACOB RIIS PARK



Gateway National Recreation Area

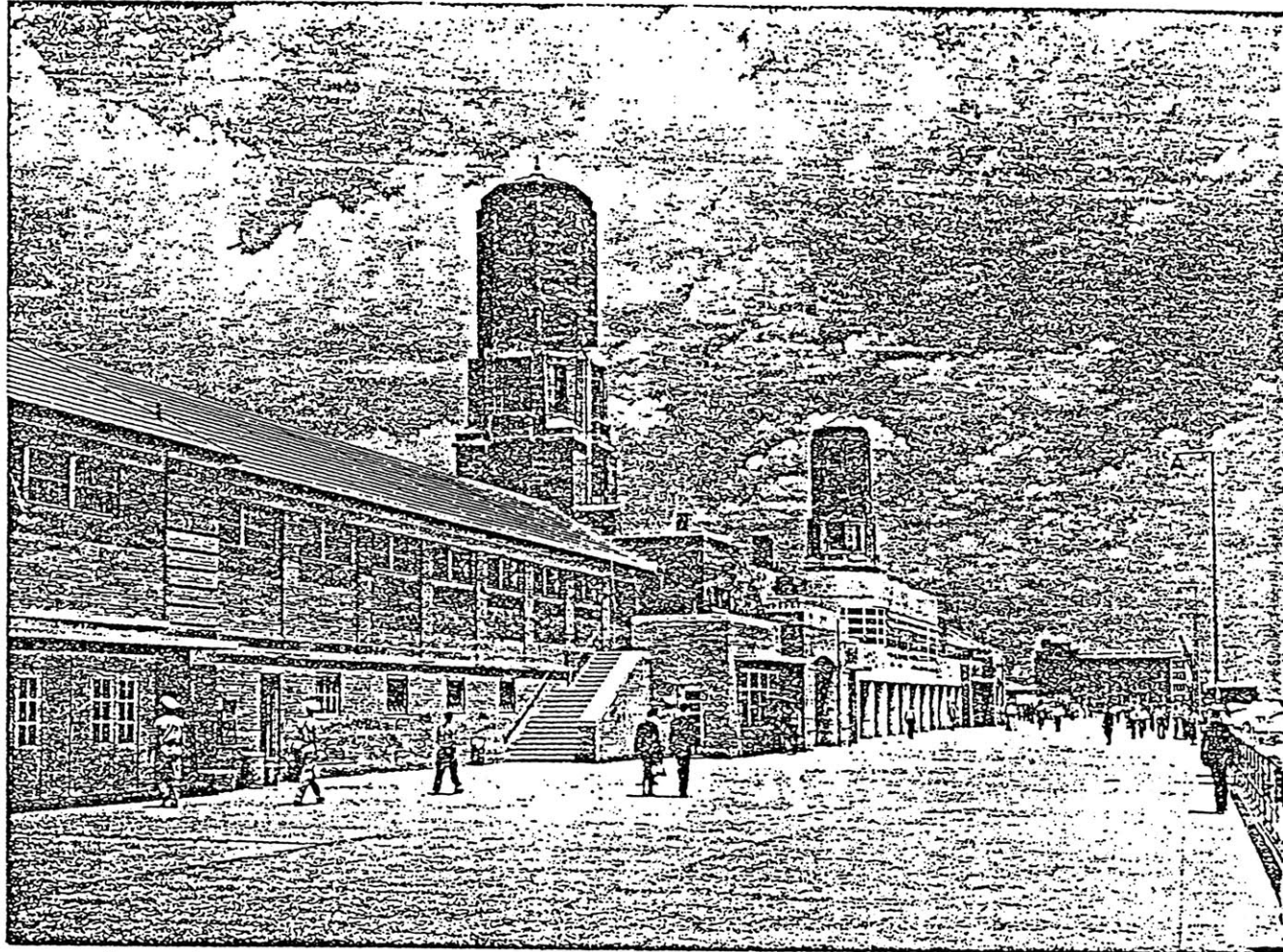


Figure 6: Beach Pavilion (Parts 1, 2, and 3), 1937. Building was painted at this time and upper levels of towers constructed.  
Photo: Courtesy of N.Y.C. Department of Parks and Recreation.

## THE SITE

### A Brief History

This short history of the site was also provided by the National Park Service in their Request For Proposals. "In the last quarter of the 19th century, the site of Jacob Riis Park was identified by a group of private investors as an ideal resort area for New Yorkers, easily reached by a newly constructed railroad line. Their development plans were never fully realized, however, and in 1912 the City of New York acquired the site for a municipal "Seaside Park." The park was subsequently renamed for Jacob A. Riis, an urban reformer who had championed the cause of New York City tenement dwellers and advocated excursions to the seashore on their behalf. The bathhouse was completed in 1932. Four years later, under the direction of Robert Moses, new Parks Commissioner for New York City, the entire park was developed on an ambitious scale. The bathhouse was substantially enlarged, the beachfront was expanded, extensive recreational facilities were added, and the huge 9,700-car parking lot was constructed.

In 1974 the City of New York transferred Jacob Riis Park to the National Park Service, which has continued its operation. Today, the park attracts an extremely diverse

population in terms of age, income, race, and ethnicity, with more than 250,000 people visiting the beach on a hot summer weekend."

Jacob Riis Park is suffering, as are all National Parks, from a lack of sufficient funds to maintain and improve its facilities. The seaside bathhouse has fallen into disrepair and the National Park Service does not have the resources to restore it. The National Park Service has thus decided to seek assistance from the private sector. The following section first presents the current status of the site and then outlines this development approach.

#### Current Status

Jacob Riis Park was until 1974 a city park and the users today demonstrate that fact. Although it carries the label of a national park it is primarily visited by citizens of the City of New York. The National Park Service estimates that 80% of yearly visitors are from the metropolitan area. These users are faced with a facility which is growing old without proper upkeep. The historic bathhouse is in a state of deterioration and is closed except for a small food stand and bathroom facility. The park contains not a single bench or picnic table and is severely lacking in shaded areas. A par three golf course continues to be popular and the 11 boardwalk concession stands do well on summer weekends. The

9,700 car parking lot has a surface that is cracking and grass is sprouting through. The beach itself is suffering from erosion and has been decreasing in size yearly. The jetties designed to prevent this are in varying states of disrepair. The National Park Service reports that their capital budget is only \$19,000,000 for the entire national system and little can be done to stem the tide of deterioration at Jacob Riis Park. It is in this context that the Park Service has decided to seek assistance from the private sector.

The development approach was depicted in the Request For Proposals, issued to prospective developers:

"The National Park Service is seeking a development partner with which to share and realize its vision--a revitalized Jacob Riis Park that blends the ambience of its historic features with the liveliness of new, contemporary activity. The Park Service envisions a development that will complement its own recreational objectives for the park and enhance park use for existing visitors. In order to achieve its objectives, the National Park Service is prepared to consider proposals that contain nontraditional park activities. Such activities might include, for example; a restaurant and catering facility to accommodate weddings and other events, a dinner theater, a concert stage, a conference or corporate retreat center, or a recreational

facility housing a spa, tennis courts, and a pool. These are offered as examples only, and should in no way be construed as uses preferred by the National Park Service.

Portions of Jacob Riis Park will be made available to a developer on a concessions contract or historic-property lease basis. Although projected revenues to the National Park Service will be a factor in developer selection, they will not be as important as the quality of the development, its design, its management, and the degree to which National Park Service objectives are met."

The next section sketches a history of the Rockaway Peninsula which contains Jacob Riis Park. It presents a picture of the environment which surrounds the park. Later interviews will note active political powers in sections of the Rockaways. Another reason to view the community context is that they share locational problems with Jacob Riis. For example, the Superintendent of the Gateway National Recreation Area has entered into agreement with its neighbors in the Breezy Point section of the Rockaways that it would host no activities that would cause further traffic congestion on the peninsula. Jacob Riis Park is very involved with its neighbors and the next section will review their characteristics.

## THE COMMUNITY

### Community Context

The Rockaways are part of a city administrative district known as a community board. Each year the local community boards publish a list of district needs and the section quoted below comes from an excerpt of that publication for fiscal year 1987. It details a short history of the Rockaways.

"Community Board No. 14 Queens encompasses the Rockaway Peninsula, some eleven miles in length, averaging less than three quarters of a mile in width, plus the small community of Broad Channel. Rockaway is often termed a "microcosm of New York City" with its some 100,000 people of multi-ethnic, multi-religious groupings and the problems of the aged, the poor and those on Federal, State, and City assistance. There are portions of middle income population, oases of attractive housing in garden-like settings interspersed with public housing projects and dilapidated bungalows housing the less fortunate population. Contrast and diversity characterize the Rockaways of today. It was not ever thus. In the early 1920's, the Rockaways was a fashionable beach resort, a gathering place for society. In the 1980's, the

beautiful bayfront is spotted with the Edgemere Landfill, a "garbage dump". Fifty years ago, nobody could have thought that Arverne-by-the-Sea, the jewel of the Rockaways, would become one of New York City's worst slums."

The Rockaways possesses 7 1/2 miles of beach and boardwalk which have potential to offer much not just to the residents of the peninsula, but to the citizens of the entire City of New York. The Rockaways are clearly on a downward cycle from the prosperity of 50 years ago and the question is not whether it will ever see those times again, but rather how and when it will regain its attractiveness and status. Population characteristics from the report on community needs are contained in the appendix. Additionally, demographic charts from the 1980 census were obtained from the Brooklyn City Planners Office and are also in the appendix. Current population is listed at 100,552 of which 56% is white, 31% is black and 11% is of hispanic background. The total number of persons receiving income assistance is 22,799 or 23.2% of the population. The demographics charts depict in the surrounding areas of Brooklyn and Queens a density of between 25 to 175 persons per acre. They represent over 80% of the summer patronage at the park. Jacob Riis is not the type of National Park that draws from a national audience such as Yosemite. It was a city park until 1974 and continues today to serve those same people.

## Community Perceptions

In the words of Vincent D. O'Conner, businessman and member of Community Board 14 which comprises the Rockaway Peninsula, Jacob Riis Park is "GEOGRAPHICALLY BUT NOT PSYCHOLOGICALLY CLOSE" to the rest of New York City. Although there are other real problems that impede the site for purposes of development, this mental block in the minds of the citizens of the Boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn is at the heart of the site's difficulties. It is a theme that was repeated over and over again in interviews with city planners, businessmen and people who live in the area. To them the Rockaways are far away across "those" bridges and not easily accessible by public transport. Neither is it a place to go in the off season or winter months for fear of getting "stranded" in a storm.

Although accurately billed by the National Park Service as "located 25 miles from midtown Manhattan" , Jacob Riis Park is currently viewed by New Yorkers as isolated, distant and solely a summer public beach. This perception by the general public is a key challenge that must be overcome in order to provide a successful year-round activity at the site.

What follows is a summary of interviews conducted with local businessmen, the local city planner, and civic leaders. Those interviewed were asked their opinion of what

types of uses would work at the park and to give their general perceptions of its current situation. Individuals were chosen for interview because they either had a particular familiarity with the Rockaways or the park, e.g. the local city planner and park policeman, or because they were engaged in the types of business that were given as examples by the National Park Service in its Request For Proposal as possible future uses, e.g. a restaurant or catering hall. Basically it was hoped that all those who were interviewed would contribute some small piece to the puzzle, which when finally placed together would give a clear picture of, or at least, a broad insight into, what activities would best work at Jacob Riis Park.

The interviews were conducted only with local businessmen and civic leaders from New York City. This may seem strange in that Jacob Riis Park is a "National" Park. However, Jacob Riis Park is an urban park and has never enjoyed the national following as such facilities in other areas of the country such as Yellowstone or Yosemite National Parks. The Park administration estimates that over 80% of the users of Jacob Riis Park are from New York City. Thus, when seeking information concerning development potential at the park and what activities would be most well-received by its guests, the choice of who to talk to was driven by these realities of park patronage. The National Park Service, in its Request

For Proposal, stated its intent to enhance park use for existing users. Who better then to speak to about what would enhance their experience then the current users themselves? And likewise, who is better to speak about new types of business activity than the local businessmen who currently serve this clientele.

Another peculiarity of Jacob Riis Park is its location between two powerful neighbors. These neighbors would certainly have input into a development activity at the park and thus it was important to talk to local civic leaders and discover what they would be able to tolerate. Furthermore, the park superintendent has, in effect, an agreement with one of its neighbors, Breezy Point, concerning access problems to the peninsula. It is clear that the park service is involved locally and no evidence at all that it is concerned about drawing a national audience. The interviews reflect this reality.

#### THE INTERVIEWS

##### Responses

Vincent D. O'Conner - Funeral Home Director located at 91-05 Beach Channel Drive in Rockaway Beach and Member of the Queens Community Board District 14 which encompasses the Rockaway Peninsula.

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Mr. O'Conner is the second generation in the funeral business which was started by his father at its present location in Rockaway. He is also a member of the community board and the local chamber of commerce. Mr. O'Conner, when told of the reason for my interview, immediately spoke of the locational problem of doing business in the Rockaways. It was Mr. O'Conner who stated that it was not only a physical distance but a psychological one. He felt that people conjured up thoughts about inclement weather and simply will not come over to visit or conduct business. He related that his business suffers from this impression held by the people of Brooklyn and Queens. They believe that the Rockaway Peninsula is inaccessible, when in fact actual driving time to his facility is much less than many similiar sites in Queens. However, people have continued to choose other funeral homes because of this fear of crossing the bridge to the peninsula. Consequently, his clientele are almost exclusively from the peninsula. This has been a problem due to the changing makeup of the population and the highly ethnic nature of the funeral business. He felt strongly that marketing anything in Rockaway to draw outsiders would be extremely difficult.

Mr. O'Conner felt that Jacob Riis Park was not suitable for year-round use at this time. He felt strongly that it would suffer from the same real and imagined locational problems that plague the entire peninsula. The season for most uses

on the peninsula is 4-5 months and this, he related, will stay with the site because people do not come over to the peninsula in the winter "even to wake the deceased".

Mr. O'Conner also spoke of his time on the community board in which other major projects were discussed for the peninsula. For example, the Rockaways were discussed as a possible site for a major domal sports stadium by the then, Borough President, Donald Manes. This idea was tabled, however, due to the poor mass transportation system feeding the peninsula. Mr. O'Conner recalled many a subway train stranded while coming across the bay on a cold winter evening with the heating system malfunctioning. Moreover, the two bridges are not capable of handling a flow of traffic that would be generated by such an activity. Another major project which was talked about was a facility for casino gambling. This proposal was defeated on a legislative basis, but certainly it would have failed to pass muster because of the same reasons cited above for a major sports complex.

Mr. O'Conner spoke about the City housing project that exists in Rockaway and the effect it has had on development. He related that it has become a dumping ground for the city's chronically unemployed because those who do work choose housing projects closer to their employment rather than face the tough commute from the peninsula. Current figures show that 20% of the 100,000 people who live in the Rockaways receive income support and most of those live in

this housing project. In addition, the housing project has a very large percentage of families with a single parent household, in most cases the mother. It is considered a dangerous area and Mr. O'Conner stated that he does not draw business from the project or from anyone who must cross through it. In summary, it is a major impediment to any private development taking place in that eastern section of the peninsula.

Mr. O'Conner summed up by stating that he felt that private development in accord with the desires of the National Park Service would not be feasible. He felt that Rockaway remained too far away from the critical mass of population in Brooklyn and Queens physically, and even more importantly, psychologically.

Mr. Robert Mazzucco - City Planner for the Borough of Queens with responsibility for the Rockaways.

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Mr. Mazzucco was very cooperative and extremely well informed on his area of supervision. He initially spoke of the ethnic makeup of the district and the power structure. The Rockaway Peninsula is composed of at least thirteen distinct sections, each with its own name, neighborhoods, and characteristics, but bound together through a common geography, common problems and common interests. From a west

to easterly direction, the sections are Breezy Point, Rockaway Point, Neponsit, Belle Harbor, Rockaway Park, Seaside, Hammel, Rockaway Beach, Arverne, Edgemere, Wavecrest and Far Rockaway. Mr. Mazzucco stated that Breezy Point and Rockaway Point are Irish and Jewish and politically very strong. This community is the nearest to Jacob Riis Park on its western border separated only by old Fort Tilden, an inactive Army base. He cited as an example of their political power that in the 1960's a high rise apartment complex began construction in Rockaway Point. It was to contain 4000 units and the shells and plumbing were in place when the community forced a cessation of work. The Breezy Point Coop, a private community which has its own police, fire, sanitation and septic system, put pressure on the then Mayor Wagner who proceeded to condemn the project; it was finally demolished in 1978. The community influence continues to this day and Mr. Mazzucco feels that if they should oppose a major new use at Jacob Riis Park that it would not take place. Bordering Jacob Riis Park on its eastern border is the section designated Neponsit. Next to that is Belle Harbor. Neponsit is primarily Jewish and combines wealth and power in the political halls of city and state government. Belle Harbor is also wealthy and its residents of Jewish, Irish, and Italian heritage. These two areas have never wished to mix with Riis Park and have insured this by legislating against any parking on their streets. This is highly unusual and has the end result of

not allowing any overspill of Riis Park people into their neighborhood. Additionally, the public beaches which extend from Riis Park along their border are virtually inaccessible to anyone but residents due to a lack of public parking and mass transit.

Another example of the political power of Neponsit was recounted by Mr. Mazzucco concerning the nude bathing which took place several years ago at bays 1, 2 and 3 in Riis Park which are immediately adjacent to Neponsit. There was no Federal Law prohibiting such activity. Where a state law exists, however, the Federal Park Police would be directed to enforce it. Neponsit was upset by the bathing and lobbied the New York State Assembly to enact a prohibition against such activity in the state. The upshot was the cessation of nude bathing at Riis Park.

Mr. Mazzucco felt that Neponsit would oppose any big development unless it was self-contained. Thus, as with any development, sensitivity to the neighboring tenants is important but in this case it appears to be essential.

Further along the peninsula is Rockaway Park which contains the once popular amusement park that is now being closed for lack of use and escalating insurance costs. It is an indicator that such a game park would probably not fare well at Riis Park. In any case the national trend appears to have shifted to large adventure parks. Moving east, past the

Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge, there is a poorer section of the peninsula comprising mainly black and hispanic residents. It also contains at its center the large public housing project to which Mr. O'Conner referred. In the Community District needs report for 1987 the glory days of this neighborhood are contrasted with today's blight: " Fifty years ago, nobody could have prognosticated that Arverne-by-the-Sea, the jewel of the Rockaways, would become one of New York City's worst slums. The proposed cure, Urban Renewal, remains more of a problem than the initial disease". Finally the peninsula is anchored by Far Rockaway which borders on the relatively affluent communities of Nassau County. This area is beginning to see a small Jewish community enter and start to rehabilitate some of the buildings. Clearly this could be viewed as the beginning of the cycle seen so often in real estate in New York City where neighborhoods pass through periods of downturn and renewal. The question for the Rockaways and Jacob Riis Park is whether that time is imminent.

Mr. Mazzucco spoke about the access problems. He related that the subway provides very poor service and that this view is shared by all the people of Rockaway. The trip to lower Manhattan takes 1 1/2 to 2 hours and requires passengers to switch trains at Broad Street station. Furthermore, the train passes through East New York and

Bushwick which are two of the city's toughest neighborhoods. Mr. Mazzucco made two points about automobile access. First, the Breezy Point Coop will not tolerate too much traffic and has lobbied to have traffic turned around at the bridges on high volume weekends before people even get over to the peninsula. Second, the tolls are presently \$1.00 each way which causes some people to think twice about making the trip.

In conclusion, Mr. Mazzucco stated that he felt that there was "no way that anything big will go" into Jacob Riis Park. He speculated that an athletic facility might possibly succeed attracting people from Neponsit or Belle Harbor. He added that maybe a restaurant, but it would have to be a major destination and it was at best risky. Mr. Mazzucco concluded with the theme that clearly ran through the entire interview, i.e. that there are power brokers on the peninsula and that any development must factor them into the scenario.

Ms. Holly Half - New York City Planning Office, Waterfront  
Division

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Ms. Half began immediately by emphasizing that Jacob Riis is a national park and that any proposed use should be linked to that recreational use. When questioned about her views on

possible uses she felt that a restaurant with access to the beach area would be a sound idea and that cafes along the boardwalk outside the bathhouse would also be appropriate and successful. She did admit, however, that the area received intense use only during the months of July and August.

Ms. Half also warned that location was not the only key to a successful restaurant operation. She cited the "Waters Edge" in Queens which is situated on the East River facing the Manhattan skyline. This site has possibly the most impressive view of any in the city, but because of poor management and food quality, has failed. The message being that the food service business is a risky affair at best.

Ms. Half then spoke about a site in the Rockaways at Arverne which contains 300 acres of oceanfront real estate. This site has received little attention from the real estate community simply because it is adjacent to the worst public housing development in the city. The peninsula, with some fabulous sites on paper, cannot realize its potential.

Finally, Ms. Half offered her opinion that neither the State nor the City would wish to get involved in the development of Jacob Riis Park. At this juncture there is no constituency in these quarters. She feels, however, that if public support were aroused sufficiently and elected officials effectively lobbied, the public pursestrings could be loosened. That was the key in the 1930's when

Robert Moses engineered the necessary support to build an extension to the Jacob Riis Bathhouse and the Marine Parkway Bridge access.

Joel Gerstel - Chairman of Community Board 14 and Owner of the Westrich Restaurant on Bay 116th Street in Rockaway.

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Mr. Gerstel spoke first from his experience in the restaurant business. He felt that a fast food operation at Jacob Riis Park would be the best way to satisfy the beach goers. He did emphasize the risks involved in such an operation and related some of the problems that are being experienced this summer. For one, the attendance is way down due to the poor weather and the early accumulation of jellyfish. The latter, which normally appear during the month of August and remain a week, arrived in early July and have remained since. Mr. Gerstel did emphasize that such a business would be summertime only. He felt that during the winter people would not venture to this "out of the way place", especially if they simply wanted to have a few cocktails. Moreover, driving-while-intoxicated laws have become a serious matter and people do consider them when choosing an eating establishment.

When asked about other uses, which he felt might be suitable for Riis Park he offered the idea of a hotel or possibly a gambling casino site. He noted that there are no hotels in the area and pointed to the success of Atlantic Beach, New Jersey for casinos.

Mr. Joseph Stehn - President of the Breezy Point Coop, which owns the land and screens the applicants in this section of the peninsula.

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Mr. Stehn spoke in general terms about what might be possible at Riis Park and it was difficult to pin him down with regard to those things which might meet with disapproval from the residents of his community. He stated that Riis Park was a prime waterfront site and contained what he considered as one of the finest bathing beaches on the East coast. He felt that a quality restaurant might succeed , but cited the winter as a disincentive to potential operators. When asked about a possible swimming pool on the scale of that at Jones Beach State Park, Mr. Stehn noted how well the two cabana clubs incorporating pools were doing in his area. Also, a pool would be a welcome alternative with the advent of the jellyfish "season".

Finally, Mr. Stehn spoke of congestion. Traffic on the weekends is a "mob scene" and anything to add to that problem would surely strike a loud and sour note. He noted that all "they" would have to do is give away a free coke at Riis Park on a Saturday and the place would be impossible.

Mr. Dan Turbidy - Partner in the Restaurant Pier 92 located at 377 Beach 92nd Street, Rockaway.

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Mr. Dan Turbidy stated that he would not invest in a restaurant opportunity at Jacob Riis Park. He spoke of the high risk of the business in itself and that this is only compounded by the location and current user clientele at the park. His question was "Who is going to go there?". He noted that even if it is "very, very nice" it would have difficulty succeeding situated where it is. Pier 92 is located just the other side of the Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge and thus ideally sited to receive business from Queens. It does not advertise and in fact has very little signage to direct people to its entrance. Clearly over time it has established loyal customers who come back over and over again. Mr. Tubridy's restaurant remains open all year but loses money every winter, despite various marketing ploys to retain his customers during these months. The only way to succeed at Riis Park would be to promote it heavily, taking advantage of the media coverage that would undoubtedly accompany the opening of a newly-renovated, historic bathhouse.

Mr. Turbidy would be concerned about "who owns the park at night" in terms of the types of people who remain after the beach day is over. Finally, he offered that catering could

work, but again the risks are high and unless there was minimal financial risk and capital start-up costs he would not even think of taking a shot at it.

Mr. Bill Butler - The Boardwalk Restaurant at Jones Beach State Park, Long Island, New York.

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Mr. Butler is the manager of the Boardwalk Restaurant which, as the name implies, is located on the boardwalk at the State Park which is situated approximately 30 miles directly east of Jacob Riis Park on the Atlantic Ocean. The restaurant is part of a larger company known as Interstate United. Mr. Butler stated that the season was established by the State Park service and ran from March 15 to November 15. It originally started out as a year-round operation, but soon after cut back. His company would like to cut back further, but to date has been constrained by its lease with the Park Service. The restaurant seats 425 people and is contained in 15,643 square feet of floor space and includes a basement with another 17,146 square feet for storage. The restaurant is situated seven miles from the closest town of Wantagh, Long Island. It is connected by a long causeway that is very similiar to the one which connects to Jacob Riis Park.

Mr. Butler indicated that "We are losing money. Once winter

comes they don't even think about coming to the beach". He noted that no one will make the trip across the causeway once the beach season is over. The company had opened initially under the supposition that they would have a year-round operation. He soon realized that people give very little thought to the beach once the Labor Day Weekend has concluded. Mr. Butler went on to note that he tried advertising and even brought in a piano player, but had no luck in drawing any more people across the bay. The drive across the causeway is dark and the conclusion was reached that the restaurant was not "convenient" and thus unattractive.

In addition to the inconvenience of location, a beachfront resort suffers at the hands of mother nature. In 1981 a hurricane hit the coast and resulted in two million dollars in damages at Jones Beach. Insurance premiums are high for restaurant operators such as Mr. Butler.

When finally asked about the site at Jacob Riis Park, Mr. Butler emphasized his own experience and projected only a seasonal use with a strong element of risk. He did add that he had tried a catering program in the winter and was able to book 21 functions which included Christmas parties and other smaller family affairs. When asked about a movie theater location, he balked at the idea insisting that the beach crowd would not be interested.

Ms. Katherine Buckley - Employee of Kennedy's Restaurant for six years and sister of the owner, Mr. James Buckley. Kennedy's is located in the Breezy Point section of Rockaway.

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Ms. Buckley was employed at Kennedy's which has been located in Breezy Point for over twenty years. She noted that their restaurant faces the Manhattan skyline and the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and at night they have a wonderful view. She offered that this would not be the case at the Riis Park bathhouse as you not only face the wrong direction, but you will not be able to see the water at night unless lights are placed on the beach. Otherwise all you view is darkness. Ms. Buckley felt that this is a liability that could be easily overlooked. Kennedy's does remain open year-round and is fortunate to have a built-in clientele at Breezy Point where more and more of the summer cottages are being winterized. However, Ms. Buckley says that it is cold in the winter and people do not make the trip which requires paying the \$1.00 toll each way. She adds that patrons are also reluctant to have a few drinks and then drive home. She also noted that the two other main surf clubs in the area close all operation after the summer season.

In summary, Ms. Buckley states she has seen a few new restaurants come and go and feels if you are going to make it then you must be very good and, at best, it is risky.

Mr. Mike Rieth - Manager of The River Cafe Restaurant on the East River in Brooklyn  
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Mr. Rieth announced that the owners of the River Cafe, who also own the Water Club in Manhattan, had reviewed the Request for Proposals on the Riis Park site and had concluded that it was too isolated and thus far too risky to become involved with. Mr. Rieth continued by asserting that there is nothing to view at night from that location whereas from the River Cafe the lower Manhattan skyline is in all its glory. He concluded by again emphasizing the danger involved with the site and unable to suggest an alternative that might be workable.

Mr. Robert Ledwon - Assistant Marketing Manager for the Seaport Marketplace, Inc. located at the new Southstreet Seaport at the foot of Fulton Street in Manhattan.  
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Mr. Ledwon viewed the seasonal nature of Jacob Riis Park as prohibiting any retail use. He stated that even his tenants showed a seasonal dropoff in sales during the winter months and that Riis Park would lose out to Manhattan in any event. Shoppers will still enjoy the Manhattan experience and choose to travel to get there. This is still the case with shoppers from Westchester who often prefer the trip to New York rather than their own fine malls. Finally, when asked for his opinion on what might work he was short on

suggestions. He noted clearly, not office, and felt a hotel would also be too remote.

Ms. Marina McCabe - Director of Marketing, Fluties Oyster Bar and Restaurant located at the South Street Seaport in New York.

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In a brief interview, Ms. McCabe insisted that the location was not desirable for an operation such as Fluties. She noted that Fluties specialized in corporate meetings, banquets, and private parties and did a brisk business from the Wall Street area. She saw no such market in the vicinity of Riis Park. Ms. McCabe stated she would be hesitant to recommend to anyone to take a chance with such a remote and seasonal site.

Howard I. Jaffe - Assistant Vice President for Kinney Parking, Inc.

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Mr. Jaffe attended the field inspection of the site on June 3, 1986 and I first spoke to him at that time. In a later conversation he was more open about his feeling on the project stating that it was not high on his list of priorities. He cited the six months of poor weather, the cost of tolls to get there and his perception that the Park was utilized by a 75% minority population which would not

have the financial worth to support a major project. He also predicted that the National Park Service would never allow any "windfall" profits or be willing to lose control of their facilities. Thus, from a businessman's point of view, this offering has too much risk with too little potential for gain.

Mr. John Conforti - Partner in the Harbor Racket Club located in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

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Mr. Conforti's club is located in the vicinity of the Verranzo Narrows Bridge combines racquet sports, aerobics, a weight room and now a cocktail bar and popular night spot. He is a long-time resident of the area and familiar with Jacob Riis Park having swum and played basketball there over the years. When shown the proposal, he noted that the location is too distant to be able to draw from Manhattan and thus must look at the current users. He stated that the summer people are the key and that to be successful you must look to what needs they have. The lower-middle and middle class population are not prepared to support an expensive restaurant. He suggested something on the order of McDonalds for the concessions and possibly a middle priced range restaurant to attract beach goers to stay around afterwards. He felt an area to change clothes before dinner would be critical for the restaurant crowd. Mr Conforti also suggested a small movie theater as part of the package as

some people would enjoy a respite from the sun or would choose to remain after and view a movie while the traffic crawls over the bridge. He balked at the idea of a drive-in movie in the large parking lot because families would not wish to remain in a car after a day at the beach with tired children. Also, vandalism is a fact of life and would surely shorten the life span of a drive-in.

Mr. Conforti did feel strongly that a real money maker if done correctly would be a nightspot which could open at 10p.m. and feature dancing and cocktails and combine well with the restaurant and movie theater. It would make Jacob Riis become a destination nightspot. However, the drinking and driving laws would be problematic and the community may feel strongly about such a late night use. Mr Conforti's final suggestion was for an off season giant flea market in the parking lot. These markets are very popular in the metropolitan area and certainly a feasible use. He felt that a sports facility would have a difficult time because once people get home from work they do not wish to travel again. Also, he does not feel that there are sufficient numbers of people to support it from the Rockaway area.

In conclusion, Mr. Conforti emphasized that you must look to the current users of the facility and try to meet their needs.

Mr. Robert Dinnerman - The Naiman Company, Builders and Operators of Sports Facilities who were guest speakers at the MIT/CRED seminar on Marketing Real Estate Developments.

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Mr. Dinnerman emphasized that in order to be successful with a sports complex you need a certain type of population and location. One scenario would entail locating in a corporate center where frequently there will be corporate membership and convenience for the users. The other location that offers success is to be in an affluent neighborhood and establish a country club type activity which could command a heavy membership fee. He felt that neither condition existed at Jacob Riis Park. Neponsit does not have sufficient numbers to support the club and the privacy necessary for such a facility is not present at a public park.

Washington Hotel - This a catering hall located in Belle Harbor and specializing in a kosher menu.

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The owner of this establishment stated that he does not do a strong winter business because of the cold weather and strong winds. He related that many potential customers are fearful of the bridge and will thus not make the trip. He spoke of the Park Inn Hotel which recently closed as a result of additional competition opening on the mainland. As for Jacob Riis Park, he felt that a swimming pool would be a

well-used amenity and also a general fix-up of the playgrounds and basketball courts would serve the community just fine.

Andres Banquet Room - Caterers located on Fort Hamilton Parkway in Brooklyn, New York.

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Andres Banquet hall contains two large rooms that hold parties of 100 people and 280 people each. They sponsor approximately 230 functions total in the two rooms each year. The day manager indicated that the profit ratio for these affairs is as high as 40%-60%. He said that such large catering would not go well at Jacob Riis Park simply because of the transportation problem of asking guests to travel that distance. He foresaw even greater problems in the winter when weather becomes another factor to contend with.

Police Officer Brogan - National Park Police, Jacob Riis Park

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Officer Brogan began by stating that Riis Park is the "best beach in New York City". He viewed it as a beach for the minorities and poor people and emphasized that they come even on cloudy days just to escape their surroundings. They are not the type of people who spend money and would not be able to support a new and expensive development. He felt

strongly that Riis should be a park of the people and not for any one group. His biggest fear is that "a high class usage will be put in and we (the Park Police) will be charged to keep the riff-raff away and become security police for the new upper class use".

Officer Brogan went on to relate that the attendance has been way down this year. He attributed it to low gas prices which allow people to travel out to Jones Beach State Park and to the severe jellyfish problem which has plagued Riis since the first week of July. He felt a swimming pool would help attendance, not only because of the jellyfish, but also some people simply are fearful of the ocean. When asked about a winter use he responded, "People don't even think about the beach after September".

Lifeguard - National Park Service Lifeguard Lieutenant who had worked at Riis Park for several years.

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Riis beach is divided into 14 bays which are separated by small jetties. The lifeguard explained that the people who use each bay are very distinctive and remain segregated. He relates the use of bays 1 and 2 is by homosexuals and 3,4 and 5 by black and Haitians. Bay 6, 7, 8 and 9 are used by families primarily of Hispanic background. Bays 10 and 11 are frequented by white families. Younger whites of high school age hang out and play ball at bays 13 and 14. He also noted that the islanders, Haitians and Jamacians do not

like the sand and many of them will camp out under the trees away from the boardwalk. He stated that homosexuals do not go near bay 14 and that only a few weeks ago a mixed couple was walking near bay 13 and the black male was assaulted with baseball bats. He was not sure what was the best new use for the facility, but was very insightful as to the day to day life on the beach.

The next interview is with the assistant director of what is considered the premier state park in the New York State system. It has a capital budget of approximately 10 million dollars yearly. It is well attended and offers examples of uses that are popular with beach goers.

Mr. Frank Kollar - Assistant Superintendent, Jones Beach State Park  
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Jones Beach State Park located in Wantagh, New York is a diversified recreational facility operated by the State of New York. Mr. Frank Kollar, Assistant Superintendent of the facility described in some detail the activities and user population at the park. Though located in Long Island, the park draws heavily on New York City residents. Mr. Kollar explained that over the last five years the user population has changed. In the past the crowd had consisted of a middle-class white population that has now chosen to use the more private town beaches. They have been replaced in great

numbers by other lower income minority groups. Mr. Kollar states that on the weekends the beach is 40% minority consisting of varying backgrounds including; Spanish, black, Oriental, Portugese, and South Americans. They come almost exclusively from New York City and arrive by train, bus and auto. The train to the bus and then on to the beach costs only \$10.00 roundtrip, which includes admission to the pool and a locker, and originates at Grand Central Station in Manhattan, Jamaica Station in Queens and the Long Island Railroad Station in Brooklyn. Mr. Kollar counts 10,000 people arriving in this manner on a weekend day. There is parking for 23,000 cars and often on weekends the causeway which has three lanes in each direction can be backed up for ten miles. The question is, "Why is Jones beach so popular?".

Mr. Kollar attributes the success of Jones Beach to the diversified activities that are available. As he puts it, there is something for everyone. If someone does not like the ocean then there are two olympic size swimming pools, one with salt water and the other with fresh water. The fee is fifty cents a day and the bathers numbers 4,000 to 5,000 on weekdays and 7,500 to 10,000 on weekends (Fri., Sat., Sun.). There are also dressing rooms for up to 800 people. In addition, Jones Beach has an 18-hole three stroke golf course, an 18-hole minature golf course, a roller skating rink, two lighted softball fields, a soccer field, a free boat basin on the bay side for boats to pull

up and spend the day, swimming in the bay for those who prefer calmer water, a park exercise course and sponsored running events, a music show five nights a week featuring live dance bands with two nights of square dancing and three nights of traditional music, volleyball tournaments, and of course the Jones Beach theater. The theater originally had Guy Lombardo as its coordinator and was showing old Broadway favorites and now presents a concert series seating 10,400 with modern entertainers such as Whitney Houston. Mr. Kollar was quick to note that the park has final say on the types of shows and will endeavor to remain a family-oriented park. He stated that the park now clears \$440,000 yearly from the concert series. He did offer that only five years ago the park suffered losses of \$750,000 from the old Broadway shows. He felt that they were slow to note the change in user demand. Many who attend the concert begin the evening with dinner at the Boardwalk restaurant operated by Mr. Butler whose interview was recorded earlier. Mr. Kollar related that the winter season is slow with occasional strollers and joggers. He does run a Senior Citizens Center that is heated and has a membership of 150.

Mr. Kollar then focused on Jacob Riis Park. When asked whether a restaurant would work he responded that there would be considerable competition in Sheepshead Bay and in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn and that to succeed, it

would have to be good . He also noted that the one at Jones Beach closes in the winter. He also pointed out that the heavier minority usage at Riis Park would be another difficulty. These users tend to be poorer and cannot afford to eat out; they often bring dinner with them and barbecue at Riis Park. He recommended a picnic area with large shade trees and a swimming pool. When I mentioned a hotel he noted the difficulty in competing with the bright lights of Manhattan. He felt also that it would be cost prohibitive because certainly you would have to provide transportation to the airports and midtown etc. in order to compete. On the subject of a sports complex he was not optimistic as he felt that there was plenty of competition in the private sector already. Moreover, he felt that amusement parks were in trouble where they existed right now and cited that he was aware that Rye playground, a well established park, was currently experiencing difficulty. He agreed that large adventure parks are the current popular mode and that this would not be appropriate for Riis. Mr. Kollar was enthusiastic about his swimming pools, but noted that they are currently rehabilitating one at Jones Park and it is costing five million dollars. He estimated that a new pool with locker rooms could cost upwards of fifty million dollars.

Overall, he felt that Riis was suffering from a poor reputation and without the diversity of activities found at Jones Beach or Coney Island. He recommended that, in the

leasing agreements the Park Service signs with concessionaires, it insists on capital investment for park designated projects. He noted that one million was spent last year on such facility renovation at Jones Beach as a result of this program. Monies collected from users of the facility would thus remain at Riis Park rather than being forwarded to a large general purpose fund in Washington.

### Lessons Learned

This section summarizes major points that arose during the interviews. Many of these observations are common knowledge to the Park Service and to users of the facilities. What may be more revealing are the opinions of businessmen who operate restaurants and catering halls which are considered possible uses for the historic bathhouse at Jacob Riis Park. Their insights should prove valuable when questioning suggested uses that are proposed by developers.

The first lesson to be drawn from the interviews is that many of the people interviewed have a long historical perception of what Riis Park is. Their comments must thus be understood in that context. They possess a certain degree of pessimism toward the site and the possible uses that were suggested. They are not the fresh and unbiased visionary that the park may need, but they do represent a widely held view. They also consider the park as solely a summer public

beach. It is these long-held beliefs that must be overcome if a year round use is to be established.

Another lesson to be understood from the interviews is that Jacob Riis Park is surrounded by politically powerful neighbors. The people residing in Breezy Point and Neponset should be considered in any major new project that might be proposed for the park. They would be strong allies if lobbied correctly.

Another reality is that Jacob Riis Park is plagued by poor public transportation to the peninsula. The subway has a poor record of service and does not extend all the way to the park. The bridges are congested on summer weekends and the toll on the Marine Parkway Bridge causes people to think twice about a casual outing to the seashore. There is currently a bus running from central Brooklyn to ease the travel problem, but more can be done. For example, the bus service could be expanded to serve other sections of the city. It was mentioned that buses to Jones Beach State Park depart from several points around the city. Additionally, research should be initiated into the subject of the bridge toll. Its removal or abatement would have a positive effect on park users especially in an off season situation.

It was learned that weather conditions have a strong effect on the summer season. Poor weather keeps people away because there are few alternatives at the park under such

conditions. Additionally, the dreaded jellyfish can cause a severe drop in beach attendance. This was certainly the case this year. A pool was suggested as a solution for the jellyfish problem and also as an alternative to the many people who do not care for the ocean. This should certainly be explored. However, it was also learned that a pool does bring with it a heavy price tag.

Some insight into the risks involved in the restaurant business was gained by the process. The establishment at Jones Beach was particularly enlightening and strongly leaned towards a seasonal business only. However, there were signs that a catering aspect of the restaurant might work in the off season. This opinion was mentioned by both Mr. Butler of the Boardwalk restaurant and Mr. Tubridy of Pier 92.

It is clear from the interviews that there is no constituency that has been formed to push for park improvements. This void is one that should be filled and put into action. It was indicated that it is possible to gain assistance from local political leaders if interest and pressure is exerted. A good starting point is the subject of bridge tolls on the Marine Parkway Veterans Memorial Bridge.

Finally, the interviews revealed that Jacob Riis Park is perceived to be the beach of "last resort". People see it as a minority beach and prefer to go to Jones Beach or better

yet to the Hamptons further out on Long Island if their economic means permit. These users who flee to other areas are exactly the type of people that Jacob Riis needs to attract back. It is clear that the current users do not possess the disposable income to support a major new use at the site. This does not mean that they should not be encouraged to come and enjoy the park, but rather that new users must be encouraged to attend and lend the type of financial patronage that will be necessary. The new activities should recognize this need.

The series of interviews, and lessons learned therefrom, lead to the next question which is: "What type of new development might possibly be successful at Jacob Riis Park."

The perceptions and responses of local individuals has pointed out several realities that must be observed in planning a new development for the site. The words of Officer Brogan were echoed by almost everyone interviewed when he said, "People don't even think about the beach after September". This may change over time, but for the present a seasonal use should be accepted. Mr. Kollar of Jones Beach stated that the secret to his success was to offer something for everyone. Jacob Riis Park should do the same. It should look to the needs of its present users and insure that they are addressed while also seeking to attract new patronage. The manner in which to accomplish this is to offer a

diversified series of uses that will be attractive to these current and potential guests of the facility. Equally as important a goal is financial viability. Thus it is important to note that such suggestions as an olympic-size swimming pool, as is present at Jones Beach State Park, are currently cost prohibitive. In sum, the realities of the market and of the item costs will be a guide when considering how to approach a development plan. The next section will propose a series of uses that appear to have some validity. They are certainly not the only uses that can be thought of for the site, but are the result of an attempt to utilize the responses of those local individuals who were interviewed.

#### SUGGESTED USES AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The following is an outline of what may be appropriate uses for the bathhouse and the best immediate investment in terms of improving park facilities for current users. The purpose of this program is to accomplish the stated Park Service goals of renovating the historic bathhouse while enhancing park facilities for current users. Implicit in those goals is the necessity of attracting new patrons who will have the disposable income to support these capital improvements. This will be accomplished primarily by the new uses at the bathhouse. The following program was generated

partially as a result of reviewing the Request For Proposal in which several possible uses were suggested by the park service to include; a restaurant and catering facility, a dinner theater, a concert stage, a conference or corporate retreat center, or a recreational facility housing spa, tennis courts, and pool. The interview process then served as a sounding board for these uses and offered a critique from the "street" about their viability. Finally, new alternatives were suggested by those interviewed such as a dance club or music fair to draw new patrons. At the same time reminders were given of the need to improve facilities for the current population. The following activities were conceived through this process and deal only with uses at the bathhouse. Immediately following will be a plan to improve the use outside the bathhouse. Costs for the rehabilitation will then be listed along with other associated expenses.

#### Recommended Activities at the Bathhouse

1. Concessions - Food concessions which are moderately priced are currently in place at the park. The Park Service received \$50,000 in lease payments from this tenant in 1985. The current beach goers frequented these establishments and such activities have a long tradition on the boardwalks of

many of our country's beaches. This proposal would devote the entire first floor of the bathhouse which fronts on the boardwalk to this use. This amounts to 16,741 square foot of space. Mr. Fred VanderKloot, a New York City marketing consultant, estimated rents at approximately \$15 per sf for a commercial site on the water in the metropolitan area. A percentage of gross receipts leasing agreement might also be agreed upon. Estimated revenue using the \$15 per square foot figure equals \$251,115. Additionally, in the proposal for the reuse and rehabilitation of Jacob Riis Park submitted by Mr. Jerome Wilson to the National Park Service two major chain food operators both in the bathhouse estimated their revenues at \$150,000 each. This supports the more conservative figure of \$251,115. Leases would insure that these facilities are open for business at a minimum from Memorial Day until Labor Day, but would encourage longer periods if business warranted. Popular fast food chains would be welcomed to the site if they meet with Park Service approval.

2. Information Kiosk and Ticket Sales Booth - The Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment - Jacob Riis/Fort Tilden (Park Plan) prepared by the U.S. Department of Interior in 1986 demonstrated the importance it places on information stations by including two in its development and concept plan for Jacob Riis Park. Such facilities are

found centrally located in national parks around the country. The renovated historic bathhouse is certainly an appropriate location for such an activity as it lies in the very center of Jacob Riis Park. It will be used to provide park activity schedules and be a staging area for park sponsored events. In the future it may serve as a ticket sales activities for events taking place within the bathhouse. Projected revenues are deemed negligible.

3. Movie Theater - Two cinemas could located in one of the wings of the bathhouse. This use was suggested by Mr. John Conforti during the interview process. This activity will not only generate revenue but also act as a means of attracting people to the park during other than daylight hours and possibly into the off season. It will also complement other bathhouse uses such as the restaurant that will be discussed shortly. The revenue stream for this activity was formulated after talking to Mr. Mike Maxwell of USA Cinema Company. He stated that rental space was being leased at between \$15 and \$30 per sf for finished space. A conservative \$15 per sf was employed for one of the wings of the bathhouse measuring 3,996 sf. Projected revenues equal \$59,940. The season for this activity will match that of the restaurant which is to run from April 15 to October 15.

4. First Aid/Police - These essential services would be placed in the second wing of the bathhouse. The Park Service has made clear their desire that these activities remain centrally located in the bathhouse.

5. Restaurant/Catering - The restaurant was considered a high risk activity for the site by those interviewed who were in the business. This risk will be cut by combining food service with the ability to cater and have an nightclub on the roof terrace. This activity will be housed in the second floor measuring 17,277. It will also have access to the roof terrace for outdoor functions. Furthermore, the developer will put in place the necessary capital infrastructure to support the activity in an effort to again minimize the restaurateurs' upfront costs, thus attracting the best possible management personnel. This figure of \$500,000 as the cost for setting up the kitchen and restaurant with finishings was provided by Mr. Butler of the Boardwalk Restaurant at Jones Beach State Park. The projected revenue stream of \$150,000 was based on that of the Boardwalk Restaurant at Jones Beach State Park. The size of the restaurants will be almost identical at about 17,000 sf. The projected season will be from April 15 to October 15. This is a bit shorter than the Boardwalk restaurant as it pays note to Mr. Butler's suggestion for a shorter season. Its ability to stage catered affairs and serve as a

nightspot with connecting roof deck terrace will add to its potential for success. The lack of substantial capital costs for this tenant will add to the chances of obtaining a highly qualified operator.

6. Landscaped/Grass - This section comprises all of the former changing areas in the old bathhouse. It offers the ability to test the waters on a range of activities before the cost of greater improvements is expended. It can be utilized for open court games or an amphitheater in its present condition. Revenues from this area are considered negligible at this time.

#### Site Improvements and Costs

The site improvements recommended are those designated in the Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment - Jacob Riis/Fort Tilden ("Park Plan") prepared by the U.S. Department of Interior in 1986. This plan outlines specific actions to be completed in three phases. The first two phases call for the types of improvements which would immediately impact on current users. They include installing showers and rest rooms and providing for picnic areas with cooking grills and tables. Ballfields and play areas for children are also installed. The cost for completing the first two phases is \$877,718. These costs were reached by

utilizing those estimates provided by the "Park Plan" and then applying a 4% annual inflation factor to reach the 1987 estimate. The relevant "Park Plan" extracts are appended to this report.

### Bathhouse Costs

The Adaptive Use Design Study completed by the firm of Beyer, Blinder, and Belle, Architects and Planners, in April of 1984 breaks down the costs for various stages of renovation. The cost for major interior rehabilitation, structural repairs and exterior fabric rehabilitation of the bathhouse was \$58/sf in 1984. Allowing for inflation at 4% brings this cost to \$65/sf for 1987. The report also provides the cost per square foot for courtyard rehabilitation. It is listed at \$5.60/sf and once again adjusting for inflation results in a cost of \$6.30/sf. The report also suggests an additional cost of \$1.2 - \$1.5 million for special interior finishes used in new construction including specialized wall, floor and ceiling finishes, electrical and mechanical distribution and all built-ins for specialized facilities. The recommended figure of \$1.5 million will be included for this purpose. Also note that an additional \$500,000 is to be allotted for furnishings, fixtures, and equipment for the kitchen.

Soft costs are projected at 25% of the hard costs and include the following expenses: architecture and engineering, building permits and utility fees, construction insurance, development fees, design and legal fees, soils inspection, testing and inspection, construction loan interest and special consultants. The mortgage loan to value ratio assumed will be 80%, which takes into consideration that the land is included in the deal.

The following chart is designed to summarize these costs along with projected revenues. A static analysis was employed to explore the magnitude of risk and possible revenue shortfall. The present level of information does not support a discounted cash flow analysis as the assumptions required are too uncertain. Reference should be made to the area code analysis chart which is appended to this report to locate uses within the bathhouse.

BATHHOUSE COSTS

USES & BATHHOUSE AREAS	SQ. FT.	COSTS at \$65 per sq. ft.	REVENUES
(INTERIOR)			
1. Concessions Areas 1,2,3	16,741	\$1,088,165	\$250,000
2. Information/ Tickets Area 4	7,680	\$499,200	_____
3. Movie Theater Area 5	3,990	\$259,740	\$59,940
4. First Aid/ Police Area	3,996	\$259,740	_____
5. Restaurant/ Catering/ Nightspot Area 7	17,277	\$1,123,005	\$150,000
(COURTYARD)			
		COST \$6.30 per s.f.	
6. Landscaped Grass	63,240	\$398,412	_____
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7. Totals	112,930	\$3,628,262	\$459,940

# Code Analysis

The Jacob Riis Bathhouse is composed of four separate structures joined only by a freestanding masonry wall enclosure forming a large court area. The structures are a combination of exterior masonry bearing walls and steel posts and beams fire-proofed with concrete, plaster and tile. The roof trusses in the East and West Wings and the Entrance Pavilion are wood frame above a plaster ceiling. Decks in the Beach Pavilion are concrete. All buildings were designed to be fire-resistant.

Approximate gross floor areas in various parts of the building and courtyard area are:

## Enclosed area

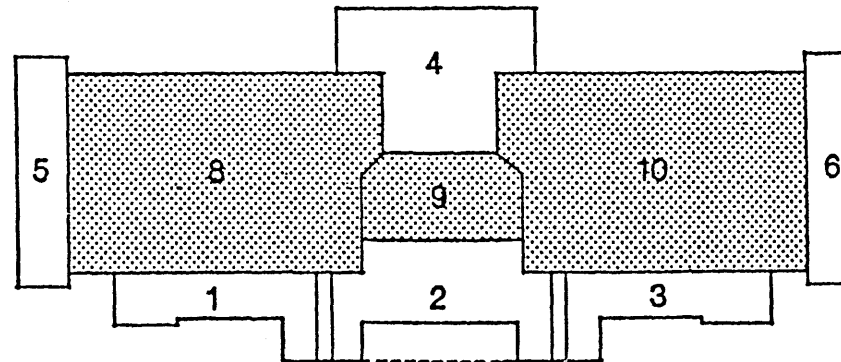
Area	1 =	3,590 sq. ft.
	2 =	9,561
	3 =	3,590
	4 =	7,680
	5 =	3,996
	6 =	3,996
	7 =	17,277
		<hr/>
		49,690 sq. ft.

## Open Courtyard area

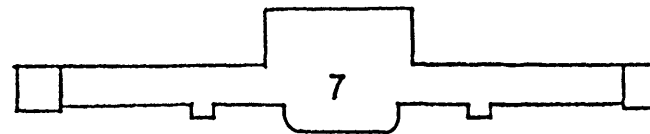
	8 =	28,500 sq. ft.
	9 =	6,240
	10 =	28,500
		<hr/>
		63,240 sq. ft.

Total Building area 112,930

First Floor



Second Floor



OTHER ASSOCIATED COSTS

1. Site Improvements	\$877,718
2. Furnishings, Fixtures & Equipment (kitchen)	\$500,000
3. Interior Finish	\$1,500,000
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4. Totals	\$2,877,718

TOTAL COSTS

1. Bathhouse	\$3,628,262
2. Associated costs	\$2,877,718
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3. Sub-Total	\$6,505,980
4. Soft Costs (25%)	\$1,626,495
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5. Total	\$8,132,475

TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE FOR THE BATHHOUSE	OPTIMISTIC \$459,940	CONSERVATIVE \$459,940
CAPITALIZATION RATE	10%	12%
CAPITALIZED VALUE OF THE REVENUE STREAM	\$4,599,400	\$3,832,833

TOTAL EQUITY NEEDED	OPTIMISTIC	CONSERVATIVE
1. Total Cost	\$8,132,475	\$8,132,475
2. Capitalized Value @ 80%	\$3,679,520	\$3,066,266
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3. Total Equity	\$4,452,955	\$5,066,209

REVENUE FLOW SHORTFALL ANNUALLY

1. Revenue Stream Needed for Total Cost at 10.75%, 20 yrs.	\$990,758
2. Revenue Projected	\$459,940
-----	
3. Shortfall	\$530,818

This section has been a short overview of one possible scenario for Jacob Riis Park. It accomplishes the rehabilitation of the main bathhouse, improves and adds to areas utilized by current patrons, and provides new activities to draw others to the project. The large courtyard space is left landscaped and can support a wide range of activities that can be tested before major capital spending is committed to any one. The next section will discuss several such alternatives.

REMEDIES TO ALLEVIATE THE SHORTFALL

A significant new use will be required to close the gap in revenue flow created by this shortfall. The National Park Service should expect a major new activity to be proposed not unlike the recreation vehicle facility or aquatic park concepts recently contained in the response to the Request For Proposals by Halper Associates.

Under the above proposal, areas 8,9, and 10, which make up the former changing areas for the old bathhouse and comprise 63,240 sf, are landscaped with grass to be prepared for possible future uses. This large space could accommodate a number of activities that might generate the necessary revenues.

One that was raised during the interview process was two large dance areas featuring music from the past and the present. The catchy title of "Now & Then" was even suggested. This type of activity could easily be installed with a temporary wooden floor and other necessary equipment. If successful, it could become a destination nightspot to blend with the restaurant and cinema.

A second concept could be adopted from the present Jones Beach Park State Theater. It presents a concert series of popular artists, and was explained by Mr. Kollar earlier in the paper. The roof above the proposed information and ticket section of the bathhouse would provide a possible stage to face audiences of approximately 8,000 to 10,000 people seated on folding chairs in the 63,240/S.F. of grassed area. Mr. Kollar related that after some earlier problems with an old Broadway show schedule were cleared up by a change to popular artists there was a positive return in 1985 of \$440,000 net to the Park System. Ms. Jayson Stone of Music Fair Productions in New York City suggested startup costs of \$500,000 for equipment and the

need for a market study before supporting such an activity at the site.

Other activities could include a games area for daytime activity by summer camps or simply an exhibition area for a variety of art works. A large video arcade could also be considered. A number of complementary activities might be staged at the same time.

The Marine Parkway Veterans Memorial Bridge could also be a possible source of revenue to support the activities at Jacob Riis Park. At present the toll is \$1.00 each way. There is certainly an argument that these fees paid by many beach goers should at least in some way support the Park. It should be noted that the bridge was built by Robert Moses, former New York City Parks Commissioner, for the express purpose of providing access to Jacob Riis. That purpose has clearly been forgotten, if today's toll is perceived as discouraging attendance. This action could be initiated by forming a group of citizens to promote Jacob Riis Park and then begin a lobbying action with elected officials. Why should the large numbers of the city's minorities who frequent the park be burdened with this added expense. There is certainly ammunition to raise public attention. If an agreement could be reached that 50% of the bridge tolls be designated to the improvement of the park it would generate well over \$200,000 annually. This figure is derived from

the parking volume alone at Jacob Riis parking field in 1985 which was 212,202 vehicles. It is certainly worthy of further research.

#### PROPOSED PROJECT'S VIABILITY

The program of uses suggested in this proposals has a fair chance of success. They were chosen in response to input received during the interviews and designed to be mutually complementary of each other. The improvements in park facilities will result in greater attendance which will assist in supporting the concession, restaurant, and cinema activities. Many who come on a summer evening to attend a movie will remain to dine or snack at the other amenities. The bathhouse restoration is possible as soon as a decision is made on uses for the restored courtyard. There are several viable ideas including one which has been tested and is successful at Jones Beach Theater. Its restoration is central to any development at the park as it is perceived by the Regional Director of the National Park Service to become the main generator of funds to support other park activities. He has stated in meetings with potential developers that it is his desire to see the bathhouse as the central focus of the park. The Regional Director of the National Park Service has also committed to

the park's Breezy Point neighbors that he will not establish a new use which will further exacerbate traffic conditions. He should follow a policy of including them and his neighbors to the east in Neponsit, in the early stage of development planning in order to avoid confrontation over such past agreements. If necessary on peak days of the summer the Park Service could provide parking at Floyd Bennett Field on the Brooklyn side of the Marine Parkway Bridge and employ a free shuttle bus to transport people to the park. This would serve to alleviate any additional traffic from reaching the peninsula. The former agreement should not impede development at the site.

The answer to the ultimate question of whether development should proceed at Jacob Riis Park in partnership with the private sector is yes, provided an agreement that the National Park Service can live with is concluded. To insure this they should move slowly and, if necessary, carry a "big stick" in the defense of ultimate Park purposes. But move they must, in order to prevent the further deterioration of the historic park facilities and to insure that a respite may be provided to those who need it most in the City of New York. To settle for further stagnation and miss the opportunity at this juncture in the parks history would be disastrous. The choice is clear: to move forward with restoration is the only answer.

The National Park Service should realize that it is unlikely that it would receive any revenue in the early years of a projects development. They may even lose the revenues they are presently receiving from their current contracts. Additionally, the project would probably be implemented incrementally in order to "test the waters". Under this scenario, the best the Park Service could hope for is a breakthrough in about five years.

#### CONCLUSION

The interviews indicate pessimism towards a variety of suggested uses on the part of community planners and businessmen. They also identify a widely held perception that Jacob Riis Park is strictly a summer beach facility frequented solely by the City's minority population. How should the National Park Service read this perception and who can change it?

The National Park Service should realize that those interviewed live and work very close to Jacob Riis Park. These local planners and businessmen have not taken a step back from their long conceived notions of the status quo. They are, to utilize a time worn phrase, too close to the

problem. What is needed and will hopefully occur as a result of the Request For Proposals process is a fresh review by people unbiased by past associations with the park. This was the case in Boston when Mr. Rouse saw the value in developing Quincy Market and then had to fight to convince the local business community that it would work. The same situation may repeat itself at Jacob Riis Park. The current development process may bring forward an individual with vision who will propose a simple, if not apparent, solution and possess the ability and stamina to bring it to fruition.

Although people's perceptions do not change overnight, what has begun at Jacob Riis Park by the Request For Proposals is planting the seed for that process. Hopefully, the gestation period will not be long and that the potential envisioned by Robert Moses and others will soon be realized anew.

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Historic Structures Report, Architectural Data Section, Jacob Riis Bathhouse Exterior, U.S. Department of Interior, February 1986.

### Interviews and Conversations with:

Officer Brogan, National Park Police, Jacob Riis Park.

Katherine Buckley, Employed at Kennedy's Restaurant in Breezy Point and sister to the owner.

Bill Butler, Manager of the Boardwalk Restaurant at Jones Beach State Park, Long Island, New York.

John Conforti, Partner, Harbor Racket Club, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

Robert Dinnerman, The Naiman Company, Sports Facilities.

Joel Gerstel, Chairmen of Community Board 14 and Owner of the Westrich Restaurant.

Holly Half, New York City Planning Office, Waterfront Division.

Howard I. Jaffe, Assistant Vice President, Kinney Parking, Inc.

Frank Kollar, Assistant Superintendent, Jones Beach State Park, Long Island, New York.

Robert Ledwon, Assistant Marketing Manager for the South Street Seaport Marketplace.

Levine Family, Washington Hotel Catering, Belle Harbor.

Lifeguard Lieutenant, Jacob Riis Park.

Day Manager, Andres Banquet Room, Brooklyn, New York.

Robert Mazzucco, City Planner in the Borough of Queens with responsibility for the Rockaway Peninsula.

Marina McCabe, Director of Marketing, Fluties Oyster Bar and Restaurant, South Street Seaport, New York City.

Vincent D. O'Conner, Funeral Home Director and Community Board Member for District 14.

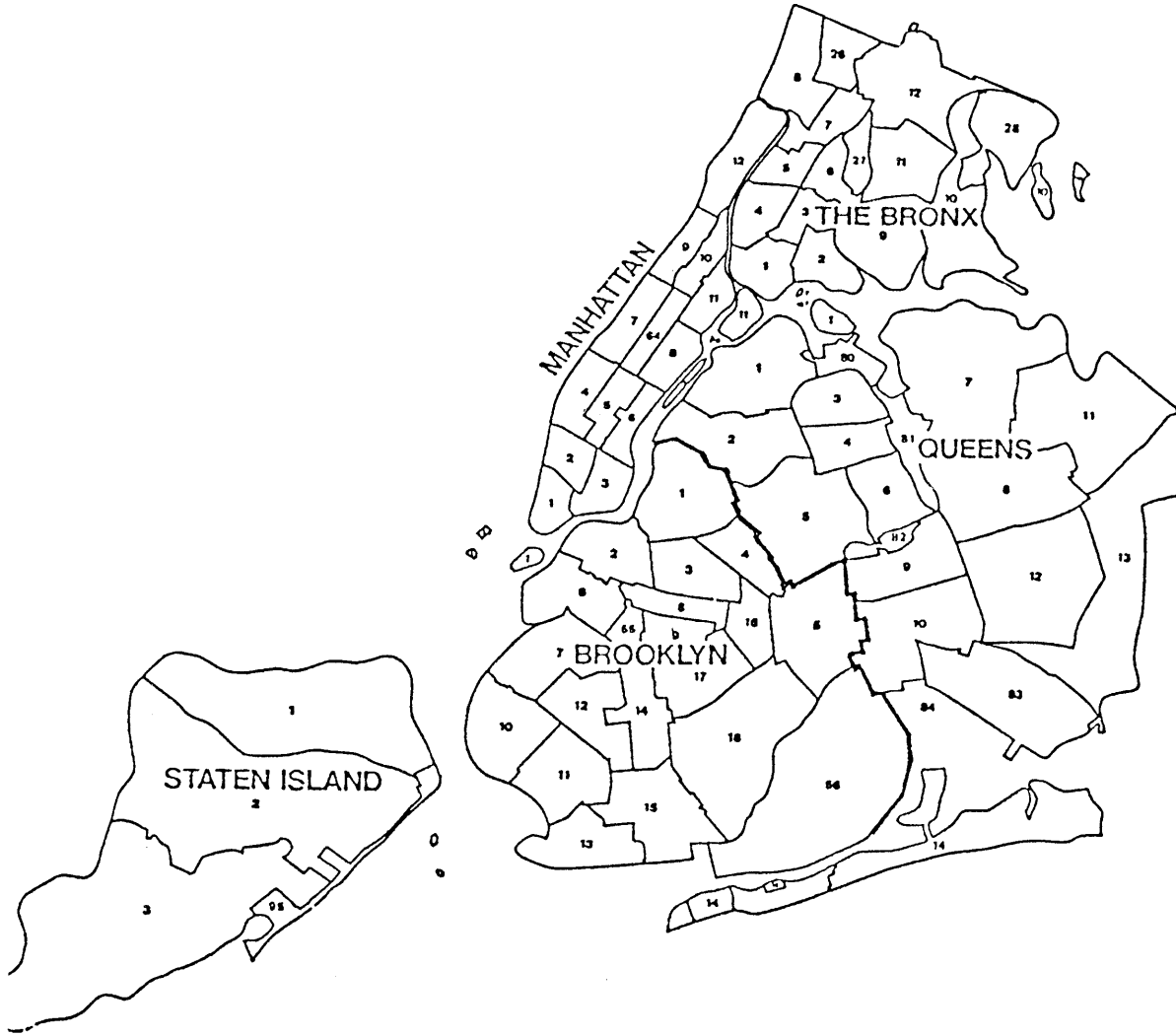
Michael Reith, Manager of the River Cafe Restaurant on the East River in the Borough of Brooklyn.

Joseph Stehn, President of the Breezy Point Coop.

Dan Turbidy, Partner in the Restaurant Pier 92.

Request For Proposals, Jacob Riis Park, Gateway National Recreation Area, Queens, New York, Land Resources Division, North Atlantic Region, National Park Service, May 15, 1986.

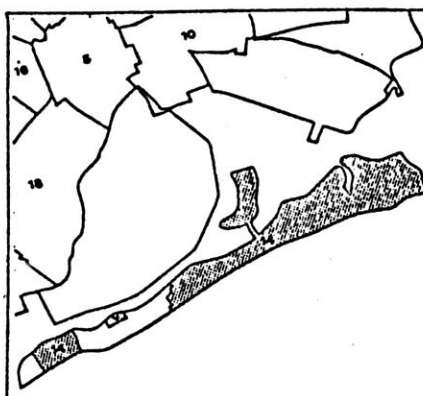
# Community Districts in New York City



# QUEENS COMMUNITY DISTRICT 14

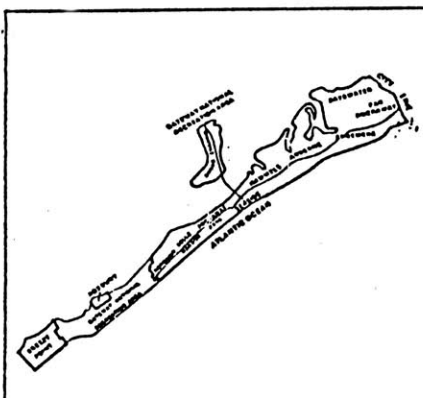
## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

	1970	1980	Net Change
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>98,192</b>	<b>100,552</b>	<b>+ 2.4</b>
<b>Ethnicity 1980</b>			
	<b>Persons</b>		<b>Percent</b>
White (non-Hispanic)	56,351		56.0
Black (non-Hispanic)	31,222		31.0
Asian & American Indians	1,221		1.2
Hispanic	11,144		11.1
Other	614		.6
<b>Age of Population 1980</b>			
	<b>Persons</b>		<b>Percent</b>
0 - 4 Years	7,466		7.4
5 - 17 Years	21,715		21.6
18 - 44 Years	33,789		33.6
45 - 64 Years	18,946		18.8
65 + Years	18,580		18.5



## INCOME 1979

	Households	Families
Number	35,374	24,670
Median Income	\$12,057	\$16,080
Per Capita Income	\$ 6,035	\$ 5,819
Percent Below Poverty		18.3



## INCOME SUPPORT

	1980	1984
Public Assistance (AFDC, Home Relief)	13,244	14,814
Supplemental Security Income	5,699	5,755
Medicaid Only	1,256	2,230
<b>Total Persons Assisted</b>	<b>20,199</b>	<b>22,799</b>
Percent of District Population Aided	20.5	23.2

## LAND USE, 1984

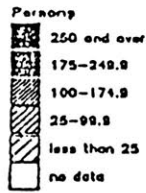
	Lots	Percent
<b>Residential</b>		
1 - 2 Family	8,476	68.5
Old Law Tenements	3	.0
Walkups	863	7.0
Elevator Apartments	81	.7
Industrial	56	.5
Commercial	395	3.2
Vacant Land	1,875	15.1
Other	627	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,376</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## HOUSING UNITS BY BUILDING TYPE

	1980	1984
1 Family	7,606	7,343
2 Family	6,418	6,312
3+ Family	23,342	23,511
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,366</b>	<b>37,166</b>

Data by census tract  
 Scale: 1 inch=21000 ft.  
 Source: 1980 Census STF-2

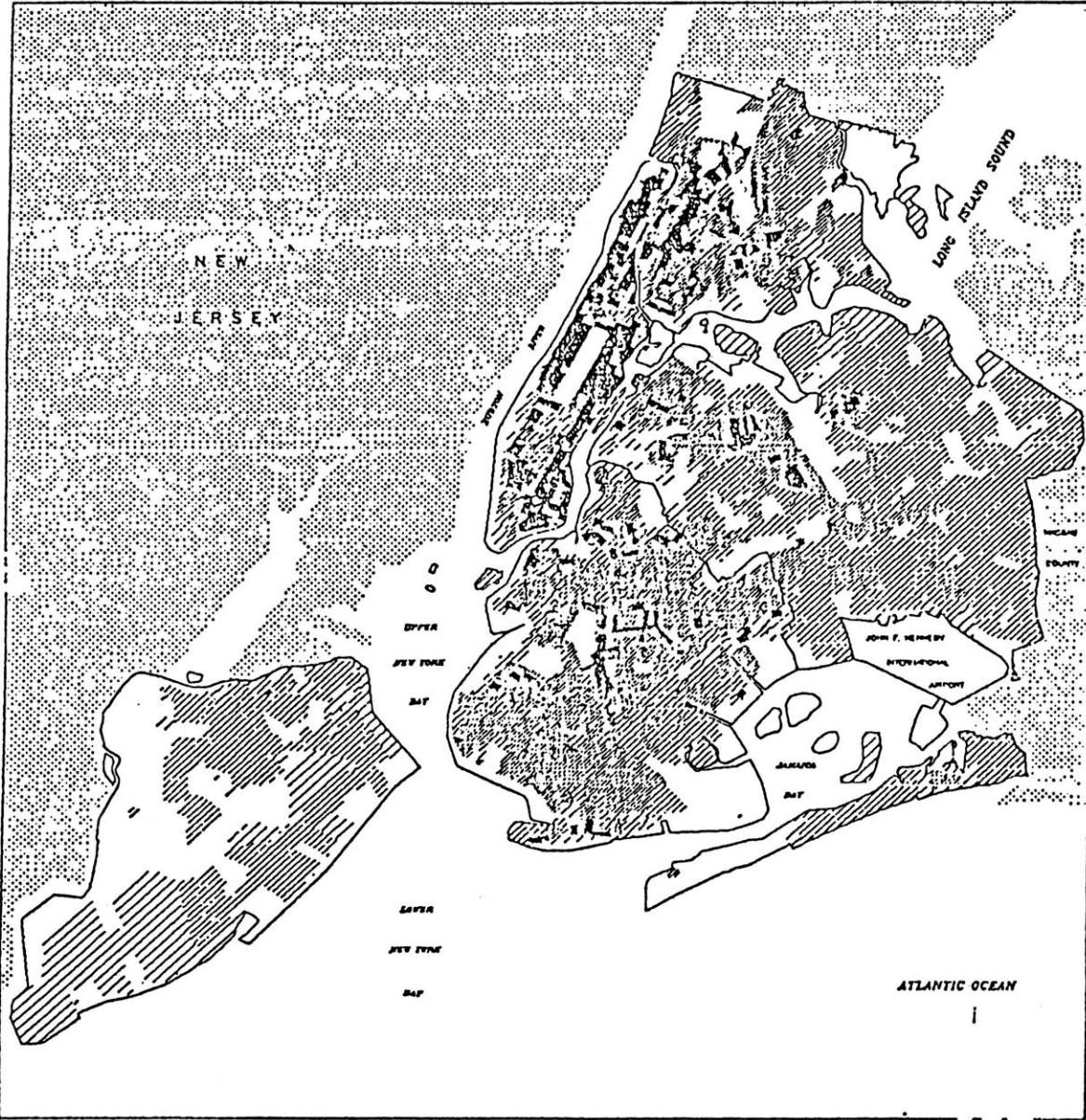
New York Department of City Planning



# Population Density

In persons per acre

## New York City



PRODUCED 15-728-1903 14.54x10.70

Data by census tract  
 Scale: 1 inch=10000 ft.  
 Source: 1980 Census STF-2

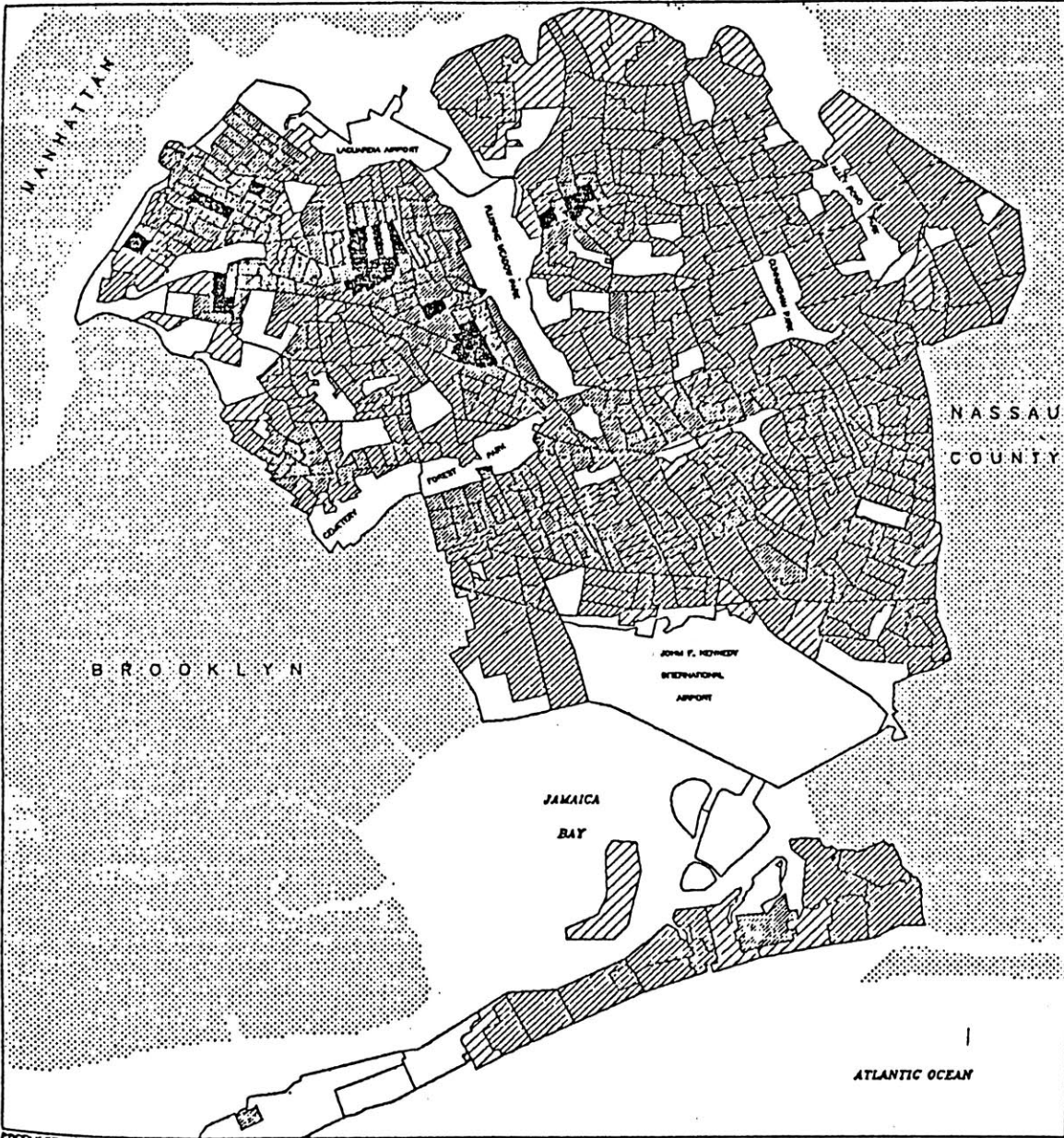
New York Department of City Planning



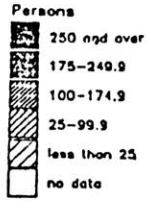
# Population Density

in persons per acre

## Queens



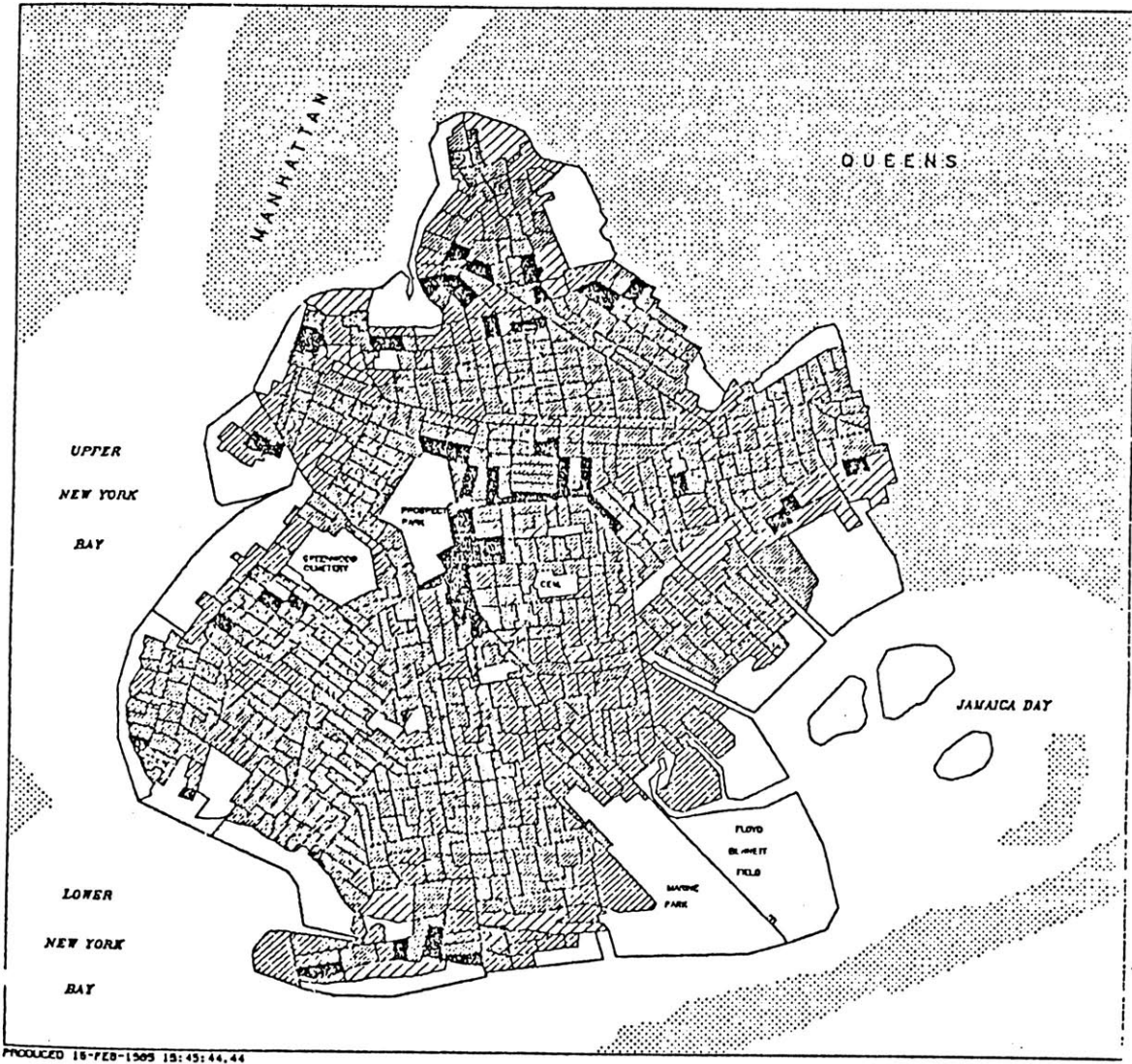
Data by census tract  
 Scale: 1 inch=9900 ft.  
 Source: 1980 Census STF-2  
 New York Department of City Planning



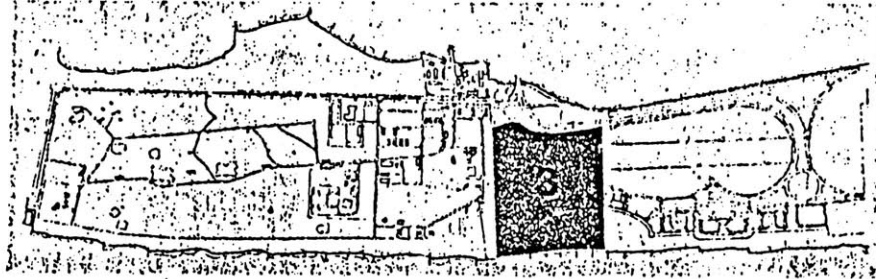
# Population Density

In persons per acre

## Brooklyn



### 3 Riis Park . . . west



#### Development and Use Concept

The changes proposed in this area are primarily cosmetic, yet the impact of many small investments will constitute a major enhancement of the park environment and subsequent improvement of the visitors experience. The entry corridor down 169th Street will be landscaped, back beach areas will be refurbished and reorganized to offer more diversity, and the Mall Plaza area—one of the abandoned focal points at Riis Park—will be given new life and vitality as a focal point of activity for senior park visitors. Water for drinking, washing, and playing will be added where possible, and other minor but cumulatively significant amenities are proposed.

#### Specific Actions

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
<p>24 Relocate lighted ballfield from Riis Park/Central area to this location. • 20,000</p> <p>25 Install outside showers for washing off sand at each entry point to the beach. • 1,500</p> <p>26 Construct new restrooms near the westernmost concession stand; include storage space for recreation equipment. • 90,000</p> <p>27 Plant trees and shrubs tolerant of local conditions to provide additional shade and shelter from the wind. • 5,000</p> <p>28 Install an unmanned information kiosk at the Roman Plaza to include a park map identifying and locating activities and services; notices of the day's special events; weather information; and possibly a pamphlet containing useful information about Gateway. • 2,000</p>	<p>29 Provide several volleyball nets for active recreation near the west end of the boardwalk, and add benches along the boardwalk in this same vicinity for spectators. • 500</p> <p>30 Create two or three shuffleboard courts near the Mall Plaza to create an activity center for senior park visitors. Provide ample moveable seating and loose chairs and tables with umbrellas. • 4,000</p> <p>31 Relocate picnicking to new areas, install shelters, tables, and cooking grills in little used areas, and provide access with new walks. • 60,000</p> <p>32 Provide a play area with equipment, sand, and water spray central to the new picnic areas. • 15,000</p>	<p>33 Install two new boardwalks across the crescent area of the beach to encourage people to use more of that area. • 180,000</p> <p>34 Acquire 169th Street from NYC. Create a landscaped median strip and establish (evening only) parking for 30 cars along east side shoulder. • 50,000</p> <p>35 Eliminate the "deadend" at the western terminus of the boardwalk by connecting it with 169th St. in a gentle curve. • 50,000</p>

#### BUDGET SUMMARY (in 1985 dollars)

• CAPITAL BUDGET ACTIONS	965,000
• MAINTENANCE & REHAB FUNDED ACTIONS	13,000

## 4 Riis Park . . . central



### Development and Use Concept

Activity areas will be reorganized to provide more space for popular activities, and to make currently unused areas more attractive and useable. The entire back beach area will be redesigned, opening up more picnic space—always at a premium at Riis Park, and will offer a viable alternative to picnicking under the low branches of the ornamental trees and shrubs that line the walkways. Reorganization and the addition of shade at the main bus stop area will eliminate the confusion created by the addition of a second bus line (the City Bus). The installation of informational signs at major pedestrian intersections will make it easier to inform park users about available facilities, activities, and events.

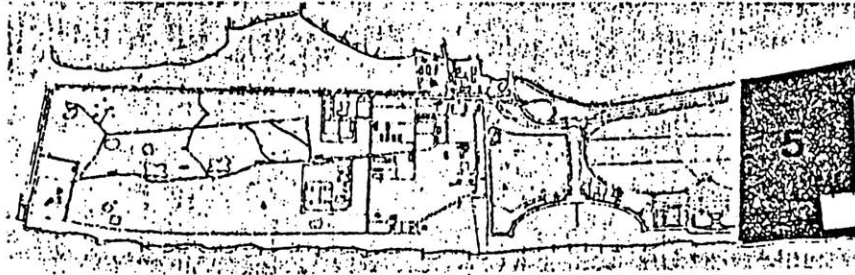
#### Specific Actions:

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
<p><b>36</b> Rearrange the central playground to create picnic sites and consolidation of the basketball courts. Create a toddler play area near the western end, including a small climbing structure, sand, water spray, shade, and seating area for parents. • 45,000</p>	<p><b>40</b> Install colored banners on the lightposts along the boardwalk. • 5,000</p>	<p><b>43</b> Provide new restrooms in the vicinity of the concession facility and add tables and chairs near the Clock Plaza. • 90,000</p>
<p><b>37</b> Create spectator seating along the edges of all paddleball and paddle-tennis courts. Convert shuffleboard area to paddleball courts after relocating shuffleboard to Mall Plaza area. • 15,000</p>	<p><b>41</b> Relocate the central ballfield to Riis Park West, remove electrical building, and convert the area to picnicking and playfield use; including the provision of picnic shelters, grills, new shade trees, and drinking water. • 190,000</p>	<p><b>44</b> Modify the existing bus maze area to accommodate two separate bus stops. Add some seating, shade trees, and signs that identify appropriate bus stops and announces schedules. • 20,000</p>
<p><b>38</b> Provide more seating along the boardwalk and locate some benches facing picnic and play areas. • 10,000</p>	<p><b>42</b> Plant trees and shrubs tolerant of local conditions to provide additional shade and shelter from the wind. • 10,000</p>	<p><b>45</b> Provide several volleyball nets for active recreation near the boardwalk and concession stand. • 500</p>
<p><b>39</b> Establish a children's play area (5-12 yr. olds) that includes play equipment, landforms, a water feature, and shaded areas on the eastern edge of the newly converted picnic area. • 40,000</p>		

#### BUDGET SUMMARY (in 1985 dollars)

• CAPITAL BUDGET ACTIONS	405,000
• MAINTENANCE & REHAB FUNDED ACTIONS	20,500

## 5 Riis Park . . . east



### Development and Use Concept

The changes proposed in this area are intended to build on what currently exists and to improve the quality of available space. The playground will be enlarged and made more challenging. Restrooms, shelters, and shade trees will be added to make the area an attractive picnic site for families. Small modifications to provide alcoves for gathering along the board walk at Bay One and the addition of tables and chairs near the concession stand will make this area more comfortable and suitable to the needs of park users in this area.

When the National Park Service acquires the Riis parking lot, the parking bays will be reoriented to make pedestrian movement safer and simpler. A concessioner will operate the lot for the Park Service.

### Specific Actions

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
<p>46 Install outside showers for washing off sand at beach entry points. • 1,500</p> <p>47 Provide unmanned informational kiosks near the intersection of major entry walks and the boardwalks. • 2,000</p> <p>48 Install more benches along the boardwalk and provide umbrella tables and chairs near the concession stand. Create several built-in alcoves just to the east of the concession building. • 25,000</p>	<p>49 Modify and expand the play area to include a water spray area, shaded sand play areas, earth mounds, and restrooms. Provide shaded picnicking by building shelters and planting trees. • 175,000</p> <p>50 Redesign the staff/handicapped parking area to permit emergency vehicles access to the boardwalk. • 15,000</p>	<p>51 Realign parking to north-south orientation to simplify pedestrian movement. • 40,000</p> <p>52 Install poles and colored banners at the pedestrian entry/exit points of the parking lot. • 15,000</p> <p>53 Extend the boardwalk around the Naponit home. • 200,000</p> <p>54 Construct a bayside parking area for 50 cars north of Rockaway Beach Boulevard. • 50,000</p> <p>55 Construct a ramp and boardwalk to provide access to the beach and ocean for disabled visitors. • 15,000</p>

### BUDGET SUMMARY (in 1985 dollars)

• CAPITAL BUDGET ACTIONS	505,000
• MAINTENANCE & REHAB FUNDED ACTIONS	33,500