

the lowline

Planning Study

FEBRUARY 2016

DRAFT



lowline



hester street
collaborative

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the lowline

INTRODUCTION

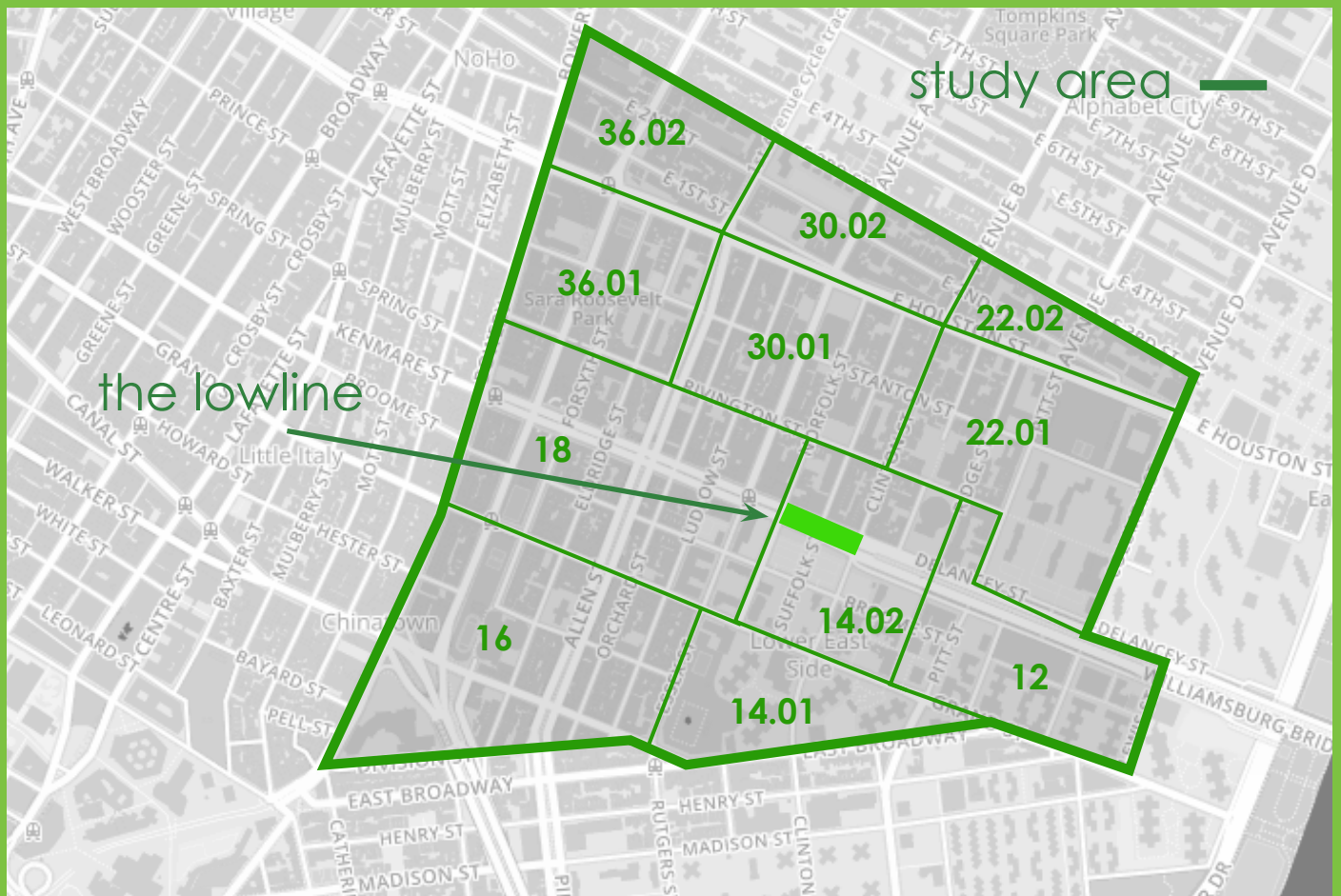
The Lowline, a proposed underground public space powered by innovative solar technology, aims to build a new kind of public space. By transforming a former underground trolley terminal into a vibrant public space, lit below ground by above ground solar panels, the Lowline proposes to reclaim long-vacant forgotten vacant land in order to provide much needed urban public space.

Hester Street Collaborative worked with The Lowline team for approximately 8 months in 2015 to gather and analyze existing community district-wide and study area data; researched best practices for public space and innovative economic development, and; interviewed a targeted group of local stakeholders to catalog community priorities and concerns, initial feedback about the project and ideas for future development.

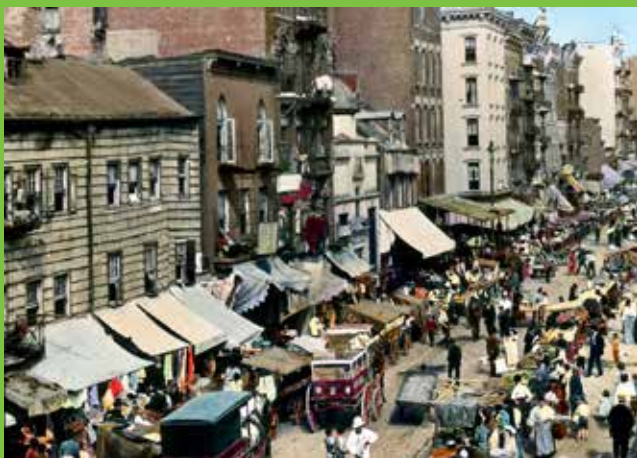
The proposed site for the Lowline project is a former trolley terminal located under Delancey Street in the heart of the Lower East Side (LES), one of New York's most iconic neighborhoods. The LES is currently facing growth and change at an unprecedented level. Still reeling from the devastating effects of Hurricane Sandy, the neighborhood is bracing for the impact of the close to 2,000 apartments currently under construction. Additionally, the City is contemplating a neighborhood re-zoning in order to increase density. The result is a generalized feeling of uncertainty – while some residents welcome the population increase and the expanded services that will come along with it, others feel that their neighborhood is under siege by incredible development pressures, rapid gentrification and the displacement of long-time and low-income residents.

In this context, any new LES development is looked askance by the community. Will this new space improve the quality of life for current residents, or will it be exclusively for newcomers and outsiders, serving to increase prices and rents in surrounding stores and apartments? The Lowline presents an opportunity to optimize positive community impact on a variety of levels, from expanding open space to fueling economic development to strengthening social resiliency. The project is also an opportunity to actively and meaningfully engage long-time residents in private development, and could create a model for innovative urban development that creatively utilizes forgotten space to benefit low-income communities and the City as a whole.

The challenges for the Lowline will be to ensure that the project actively and expressly seeks and incorporates community input into the project's design, programming, governance and financing, and; that the project results in concrete community-identified benefits for current local residents. If the Lowline is able to meet those challenges, the project could create a new kind of development project – one that is developed in true partnership with its community.



Study Area Census Tracts



Historic Jewish Market



Essex Crossing



Luxury condo, Norfolk Street

A Rapidly Changing Neighborhood

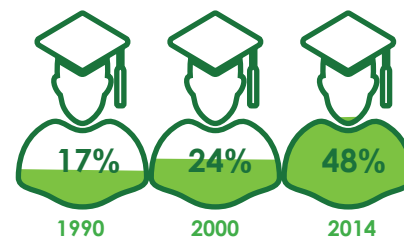
The Lower East Side is a neighborhood undergoing rapid change. What was once an historic, working class, immigrant neighborhood characterized by three generations of a family living within blocks of each other has, over the last decade, transformed into a gentrifying and transient neighborhood that epitomizes the income inequalities rampant in NYC today. Current rents are increasingly out of reach for many who grew up in the LES.

In order to get a snapshot of the socio-economic conditions in the area immediately adjacent to the Lowline site, an analysis of 11 census tracts around the proposed site was carried out. The population within these eleven census tracts is approximately forty-five to fifty thousand people and the data cited below refers to these particular tracts (also shown on map to the left).

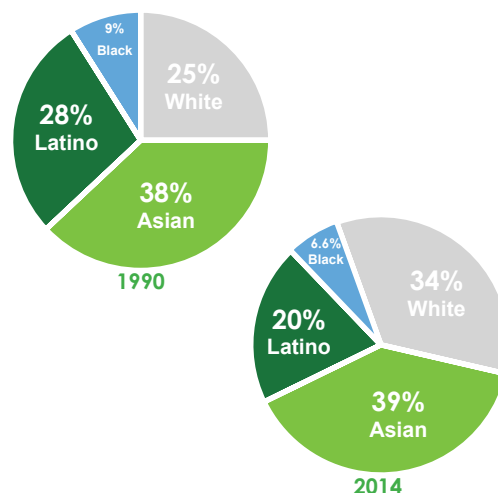
- **Racial diversity:** The area around the Lowline site is a vibrant and diverse place consisting of approximately 40% Asian, 35% White, 20% Latino and 6% African American residents. While the Asian population has been stable since 1990, there has been a 10% increase in the white population and 8% decrease in the Latino population over the last two decades, indicating the displacement of communities of color.
- **Educational attainment:** In 1990, 17% of the residents of the study area had a college or graduate degree, while about half of the population earned less than a high school degree. As of 2014, the number of residents with less than a high school degree had fallen to 25% and the number of residents with college and graduate degrees has risen to 47%. The data illustrates a shift in the educational make-up of residents to a more traditionally educated population.
- **Median Income:** Over the last two decades there also has been a marked increase in median household income in the area immediately surrounding the Lowline site. Annual incomes have risen approximately 30% - from \$37,000 in 1990 to \$49,000 in 2014 (adjusted for inflation).
- **Rent Burden:** As incomes and educational levels have risen in the area, rents and rent burden have also risen. A quarter of households in these 11 census tracts are severely rent burdened, spending more than 50 percent of their household income on rent.

Development pressures will only be exacerbated by new large scale developments currently in construction, such as the 1,000 unit mixed-income development Essex Crossing, the luxury Extel Tower and a proposed rezoning of Chinatown intended to increase density. The socio-economic data illustrates dramatic neighborhood change over the last twenty years.

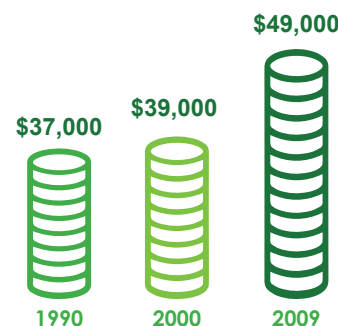
PERCENTAGE WITH BACHELORS OR MASTERS DEGREES



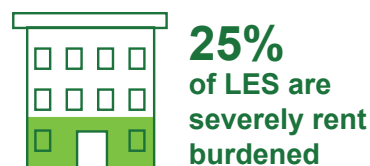
CHANGE IN RACIAL DIVERSITY



MEDIAN INCOME



RENT BURDEN (2010)



Source: Census. Data collated for 11 Census tracts immediately adjacent to Lowline site.

LES NEIGHBORHOOD



Luther Gulick Playground

New Yorkers for Parks developed the Open Space Index in 2008 as a tool to guide neighborhood open space planning and ensure that the next generation of city residents will enjoy adequate parkland, greenery, and recreation. Per that survey, as shown in the table below, LES fared poorly on active open space and facilities as well as passive open space with numbers at about half of the recommended neighborhood standards. LES also came up short when it came to urban tree canopy cover and permeable surface within parks, indicating poor environmental sustainability performance for the neighborhood.

AROUND THE LOWLINE



Seward Park

While the characteristics of the area directly adjacent to the proposed Lowline site is more or less consistent with that of the LES neighborhood, there are certain exceptions. With 40 community gardens, LES has one of the most vibrant community garden cultures in the City. The gardens, however, are almost all north of Houston Street. This study took a closer look within a five-minute walk [1/2 mile radius] around the proposed site and the results are depicted in the map at the bottom of page 7. Within this zone, there are only 3 playgrounds and 2 community gardens. Within this half mile, there are 18 schools. Some of these schools do have recreational fields but not in proportion to the high concentration of children in the area.

While there are larger parks in the vicinity of the Lowline site such as the Sara D. Roosevelt Park, East River Park and Hamilton Fish Park, there is a clear need for smaller active recreational spaces and passive green spaces in the study area.

LOWER EAST SIDE: OPEN SPACE INDEX

Open Space Elements	Lower East Side Outcomes	Proposed Neighborhood Standards
Active and Passive Open Space		
Active Open Space & Facilities	0.42 acres/ 1000 residents	1 acre of open space/ 1,000 residents
Playgrounds	3.4 playgrounds/ 1,250 children	1 playground/ 1,250 children
Athletic Fields	1 athletic fields/ 10,000 residents	1.5 fields/ 10,000 residents
Courts	9.3 courts/ 10,000 residents	5 courts/ 10,000 residents
Recreation Centers	0.6 recreation centers/ 20,000 residents	1 recreation center/ 20,000 residents
Passive Open Space	0.8 acre passive open space/ 1,000 residents	1.5 acres of open space/ 1,000 residents
Community Gardens	5.5 community gardens/ 10,000 residents	1 community garden/ 10,000 residents
Total Acres of Open Space	1.2 acres of open space/ 1,000 residents	2.5 acres of open space/ 1,000 residents
Access and Distance to Parks		
Walking Distance to a Pocket Park (Less than 1 acre)	100% of residents are within a 5 minute walk	100% of residents are within a 5 minute walk
Walking Distance to a Neighborhood Park (1-20 acres)	100% of residents are within a 5 minute walk	100% of residents are within a 5 minute walk
Walking Distance to a Large Park (20+ acres)	100% of residents are within a 10 minute walk	100% of residents are within a 10 minute walk

EDUCATION CONTEXT

LES SCHOOLS

The Lower East Side, i.e. District 1, is one of only three unzoned school districts within New York City. Findings of a recent study* that looked into the effects of open enrollment show that District 1 schools have increased in both total population and diversity from 1999 to 2011. With this change has also come more clustering of students by race and free lunch status increasing each school's dissimilarity from the others in the District. In other words, over the past dozen years, District 1 schools have become more segregated. There is also disparity in the resources related to enrichment, programming and facilities available across these schools. There are also limited after-school options. There are three Beacon centers located within Community Board 3 of which only one, Grand Street Settlement Beacon, is located in the study area.

In conclusion, there is a clear need for more free and affordable enrichment programming, after-school activities, recreational spaces and playgrounds for the children and youth in the study area.

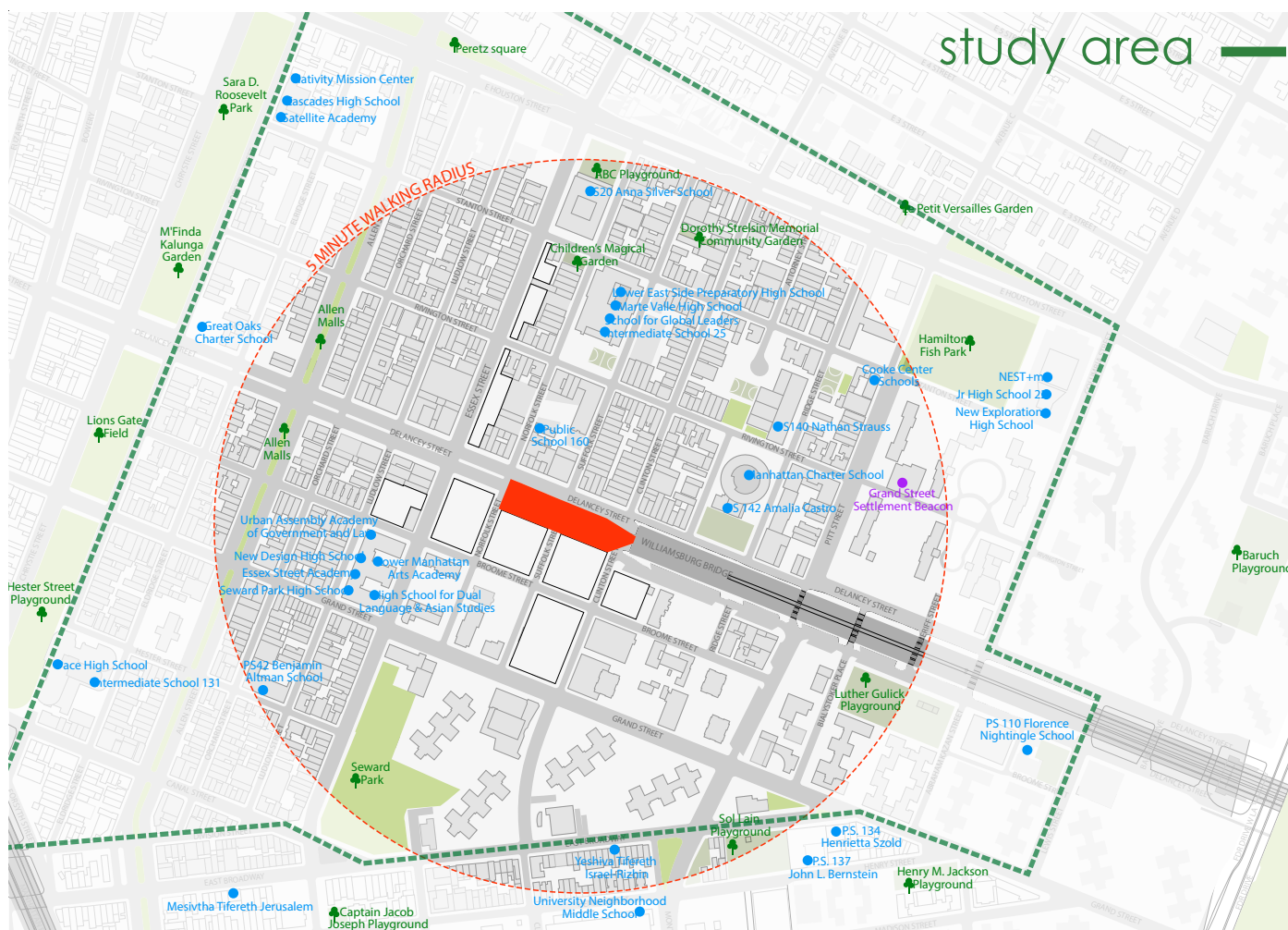
* A Study of Assignment Policy Effects; Fall 2013; WXY studio, Youth Studies Inc and George M. Janes Associates



Grand Street Settlement Beacon



PS 140 Nathan Strauss School



Open Space Context



Young Designers Program



Young Designers Program

The Lowline organization has held multiple public forums in order to engage LES residents and make room for community input.

EXHIBITS & WORKSHOPS

In early 2012, the Lowline hosted a free public exhibit, attended by over 800 people, at the Mark Miller Gallery on Orchard Street. Participants were invited to provide feedback on initial project designs.

In September 2012, the Lowline hosted a free technology demo, “Imagining the Lowline.” In a little less than two weeks 11,000 visitors provided feedback on the preliminary design and concept. The team hosted multiple community information gathering sessions during this demo, including one hosted by NYC Council Members Margaret Chin and Rosie Mendez.

Since 2014, the Lowline has hosted two additional community exhibits and workshops at a local art gallery to celebrate and showcase the high volume of ideas and feedback from participating youth, but also to invite local residents to provide additional input on both design and programming.

YOUNG DESIGNERS PROGRAM

In the past three years, the Lowline’s Young Designers Program (YDP) has reached over 2,000 young people at local community organizations like Henry Street Settlement and the Educational Alliance. YDP grew out of interest and enthusiasm among local parents, educators, and community leaders. The Program solicits design and programming input from students and teaches basic design and planning concepts. YDP has open enrollment for grades K-12, with free registration on a first-come, first-served basis.

YDP also provides experiential education in the areas of solar technology, horticulture and engineering. Students learn the principles of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) in the context of a local urban design project, the Lowline.

LOWLINE LAB

In October 2015, the Lowline Lab was opened. The Lab is designed to invite local residents to experience a mock-up of the Lowline design and to provide their feedback. The Lowline Lab is a long-term technical exhibit designed to test and showcase how the Lowline could grow and sustain plants underground. It is built inside an abandoned market on Essex Street, approximately two blocks from the proposed Lowline site. The Lab includes a series of controlled experiments in an environment mimicking the underground trolley terminal site

As of the end of 2015, over 20,000 people from the neighborhood and across the city visited the Lab. The Lowline has been collecting surveys at the Lab and online that ask visitors about their experience, their preferences and basic demographic information.

The Lowline team plans to conduct traditional design charrettes in 2016 and beyond.



Lowline Lab (source: cityscope.org)

WHAT WE HEARD



For this study, community outreach and engagement was purposely limited. Before the study officially got underway, we discussed the project with a number of community-based organizations actively involved in LES built environment issues - from housing to jobs to education to public health. Many felt that they must prioritize the very real threat of displacement as a result of active development sites and real estate pressure over a visioning exercise.

As a result, we limited our outreach to local service providers, small business owners, and the NYC Department of Small Business Services.

Our interviewees included:

Lynn Appelbaum, Educational Alliance [EA]
Willing Chin-Ma, Grand Street Settlement [GSS]
Jeremy Reiss, Henry Street Settlement [HSS]
Laura Timme, University Settlement [US]

Katie Archer: LES BID

Huy Bui : An Choi Co-Owner (LES restaurant), Architecture/Design/Build,

Tuan Bui: An Choi Co-Owner (LES restaurant), Resident

Dede Lehman, Clinton St. Baking Co.

Tony Powe: 2nd Floor on Clinton Owner; Zip Card Owner

Anne Saxelby, Saxelby Cheese, Essex Market

Danielle Kavanagh-Smith, NYC Department of Small Business Services

Winfrida Mbewe-Chen, NYC Department of Small Business Services

We asked each participant a series of questions one-on-one or in small groups about neighborhood assets, challenges and needs; perception of the Lowline project; suggestions for Lowline space, programming, financing and governance.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS

ASSETS



- Diversity of local residents
- Neighborhood character
- History

CHALLENGES



- Economic inequality and disparity
- Displacement
- Gentrification

NEEDS



- Playgrounds
- Well maintained parks that have green spaces
- Basketball courts and exercise equipment
- After-school, physical-education and extra-curricular activities
- Jobs
- High quality and affordable supermarket
- Office Space
- Businesses - big and small

KEY COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSED SITE DEVELOPMENT

+ Affordability and Accessibility

+ Programming that Meets Community Needs and Suits Varied Demographics

+ Need for Investment in Existing Neighborhood Resources/ Public Spaces

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SURVEY

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, four local, community-based organizations active in housing and community development issues in the neighborhood were invited to provide their thoughts, knowledge and suggestions regarding: existing LES community needs and assets; potential impact the Lowline would have on the neighborhood, and; ideas on programming, financing and governance for the project. These responses were provided in January and February of 2016.

Organizations that participated in the survey process are:

Association of Latino Business Owners and Residents (ALBOR)

Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAABV)

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)

Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (TBNC)



SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the survey responses. The details of the responses are provided in the Appendix.



EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS + NEEDS

Respondents were in agreement that the historic and existing diversity of the LES is its biggest asset. This character is being threatened by increased real estate prices, that in turn has caused displacement for some and further financial burden for others.

Assets

- LES was built by immigrants and communities of color and is still very diverse compared to other neighborhoods in NYC. It is still home to working-class residents across many cultures.
- Strong history and legacy of activism and collective organizing.
- Public housing stock provides much needed affordable housing for City's most vulnerable residents.

Challenges

- Growing lack of affordability in the neighborhood
- Increased real estate prices and resulting displacement and hardship for those who remain

Most pressing needs

- Housing security
- Educational resources to close the achievement gap
- Quality, living wage jobs and expanded career opportunities

Best neighborhood resources

- Seward and Tompkins Park and their libraries
- East River Waterfront
- Hamilton Fish and Dry Dock Points
- Skate park under Manhattan bridge for youth
- Community Centers (Chinatown Y, Charles B. Wang Center)
- Senior Centers, Churches and After School programs

Top resources needed in the neighborhood

- High quality affordable grocery store
- Additional funding and resources for community institutions
- More spaces and resources for youth, out of school teens and early 20s
- Arts and cultural programming
- College or University
- More senior centers

Use of existing open space + other facilities in the neighborhood

- Time and weather are not huge determinants in utilizing existing facilities in the neighborhood. In winter, outdoor space usage goes down, but spaces are still used.
- Cost, access and availability are factors that impact the use of facilities.
- There is adequate public, meeting and open space in the neighborhood. However, these spaces are under-resourced and underfunded. Better maintenance and upkeep through public and private investment of existing open spaces is desperately needed.



POTENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT

All respondents were fearful that the Lowline would further change the face of an already rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. It will inevitably add more tourists and exacerbate development pressures in an already crowded neighborhood. Neighborhood change threatens the historic identity as home to Puerto Rican and other Latino immigrants and New York City's first Chinatown.

Concerns

- Grave fear that the Lowline will change the face of the neighborhood by adding a spectacle that would not benefit existing residents.
- Lowline will take away from the character and identity of the neighborhood's existing global attraction, Chinatown.
- Lowline may end up like the Highline which has changed the face of a working class neighborhood like the Meatpacking district and displaced many long time residents.
- Deep concern that the Lowline will compete for funds from the same private and public sources that neighborhood organizations go after, thereby making underfunded local institutions even more strapped for money.
- Concern that the project will become another Basketball City which is disruptive to residents and results in a great deal of public drunkenness and noise with little public benefit or access.

Lowline - Potential for community benefits?

- Lowline will be a huge contributor to gentrification and displacement.
- Offering free STEM programming for local youth and expand outreach to local residents would be a community benefit.

Advantages + Disadvantages

- All respondents were of the opinion that the Lowline project would have more disadvantages than advantages to local residents.
- The Lowline will increase commercial and residential displacement and furthermore a liquor license (which is highly discouraged) would exacerbate the public drunkenness and vomiting that occurs near Basketball City which functions like a convention center.



PROGRAMMING, ACCESSIBILITY, COMMUNITY BENEFIT & OTHER POTENTIAL USES

Respondents stated that the Lowline could provide some very needed STEM programming for youth in the neighborhood. However, the current advertising and programming seems to be attracting the exact demographic that will accelerate gentrification. Getting neighborhood area youth and seniors to the space will be a challenge and should be carefully thought through. A binding community benefits agreement should be a precursor to the project going through the approvals process.

- The Lowline should function as a park with free passive recreation and STEM programming for youth.
- Access to the Lowline should be free and programming should be driven by local residents and community organizations.

- The space may not be particularly inviting as a park due to its darkness, accessibility challenges and ambient noise from the subway.
- In the absence of clearly articulated community benefit, excessive private events and an entrance fee will deter residents from coming to the space.
- Organizations feel that currently, the Lowline is marketed mainly to white 18 to 34 year olds. There should be real efforts to reach youth between the ages of 14 and 22, as well as people of color.
- The location and design of the entrance to the space are all factors that are likely to keep local seniors away, who might feel that the space is not for them.

Other potential uses

- Paint-ball arena
- Cheese aging cave
- Expanded transportation facility
- Leave as is



FINANCING & GOVERNANCE

All respondents stated strongly that no public funds should be used to fund the Lowline project. Furthermore, they expressed concern that the project, once complete, will be competing for the same funding streams as local, under-resourced organizations. Local participation in decision making, a truly transparent process and truth in advertising were all voiced as wishes for the governance and publicity around the Lowline development.

- A formal contract that provides and holds the project to provide real community benefit in perpetuity should be put in place.
- Private financing, while advisable, also presents a problem since the space would be subject to an outside private controlling interest.
- The project should be focused on long-term sustainability.
- The project should have meaningful community representation by including local residents on the advisory board. Fifty percent of the Board of Directors should be community stakeholders that are selected through a community based process to ensure true public participation, planning and development that is based on the needs and wants of the local residents.
- The project should avoid false advertising that brands the Lowline as a grassroots, community-driven park and create a transparent, community-based process.

POLICY



- Be pro-actively community-centric
- Tell the history of the neighborhood
- Cater to existing residents' wants and needs
- Represent the diversity of the neighborhood



GOVERNANCE



- Institute a formal system for resident involvement in programming decisions (e.g. NYCHA residents and other community reps on an advisory board)
- A system and space that connects all local schools and provides a common vehicle for their fundraising efforts



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



- Jobs for local residents
- Space for Merchants' Association Meetings/Community Events
- Space for traditional small business market and/or incubator
- Services for local needs (no more bars or cafes!)
- Use of pushcarts/ booths to introduce visitors to what's being offered in the neighborhood





PROGRAMMING

OPEN SPACE

- Sports and Recreation: year-round use to support physical-ed facilities in local schools
- Indoor Playground for younger children

FARMING/ FOOD

- Community garden / farmers market (connections to Essex Market + local restaurants)
- Greenhouse Lab

COMMERCIAL USE

- Local vendor market / incubator space for entrepreneurs
- Free meeting/event space
- Work share office space
- Flexible event space - weekly farm stands, dinner series, volunteer and education opportunities

ARTS/ CULTURE

- Public Art opportunity that is accessible to a larger audience
- Underground theatre and films [eg. Rooftop films; Shakespeare in the Park]

EDUCATION

- Community-based programming; free services; tours, classes
- Science-based programming



POLICY



What We Heard

Local residents and businesses both pointed to the history, character, and demographic diversity of the neighborhood as assets that should be preserved and celebrated. Local service providers recommended resident involvement in programming decisions and development. The Lowline can engage resident leaders in their programming and celebrate their diverse cultural history and presence through innovative storytelling strategies that can be tied to programming.

Precedent

The Leimert Phone Company, based in southern California, is conducting an ongoing experiment using bottom-up technology and neighborhood storytelling. Most recently they collaborated with the USC Annenberg Innovation Lab and with Kaos Network of Leimert Park to launch the first physical prototype called Sankofa Red. The once pay phone is now a mechanism for storing residents' histories, listening to locally produced music, and accessing Wi-Fi. The Leimert Phone Company has several prototypes, each with their own distinct abilities to enhance community cohesion in a time of rapid change.

Possibility

The Lowline could partner with local historical organizations, museums, tech incubators and other associations to provide free wifi access that also creates and shares content about local history through interactive media.

GOVERNANCE



What We Heard

The service providers and their constituents strongly suggest both programming that serves existing residents and resident involvement in programming decisions and development. The Lowline's proposed garden space is a great opportunity for programming and resident governance.

Precedent

New York City's "Green Thumb" gardening program's many community gardens across the City provide an opportunity for local residents to start and maintain community gardens that provide respite from urban life and foster community connectedness to nature and to each other. Currently, there are ten community gardens within walking distance (.35mi is the farthest, on E. 3rd St).

Possibility

The Lowline's proposed underground greenspace can provide an alternative gardening space for the local neighborhood during the winter months, when all surrounding gardens close. The Lowline can collaborate with local residents and Green Thumb to establish a community garden that is run and governed by local resident volunteers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What We Heard

Local residents we talked to were very clear that in addition to providing public space, the Lowline should also provide economic development opportunities for local residents – everything from support for existing small businesses, to services that target local needs, to jobs for local residents.

Precedent

Hot Bread Kitchen (HBK), a successful East Harlem bakery, provides culinary and business skills training and incubates small businesses. HBK builds lasting economic security for low-income, immigrant and minority individuals by creating pathways to professional opportunities in the culinary industry.

Possibility

The Lowline could partner with HBK, setting up an HBK underground outpost at the Lowline. HBK could employ local residents to sell their baked goods to Lowline visitors. The Lowline could match HBK with local workforce developers who could refer their clients to HBK's programs.



FINANCING

What We Heard

A project of this size and complexity will require significant funding first, to construct and then, to maintain. We heard from local residents that the Lowline should not be funded by public dollars desperately needed for the maintenance and repair of existing public space. At the same time, community members we spoke with fear the annual maintenance bill for such a project will require a surfeit of high-priced events inaccessible to and/or unwanted by local residents.

Precedent

The Infrastructure Guarantee Fund is a policy tool that enables private financing to be used for public infrastructure. Currently used for major infrastructure projects (water, energy, transportation) in the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and in California. The idea is that the government provide the conditions (guarantees, insurance, etc.) that eases the burden on public investment and mitigates the risk of public investment.

Possibility

The Lowline could propose a private-public partnership in which the Lowline is constructed and maintained privately and meets certain community-defined goals regarding access, programming, etc. In return, the City facilitates the financing of the Lowline by offering a funding mechanism (not funding) that incentivizes private investment by reducing risk.

PROGRAMMING



What We Heard

Local residents and community based organizations stated that there is a real need for free or low-cost STEM programs for area youth, teens and young adults. These programs are available in New York City and the LES, but are often cost prohibitive for area families. Additionally, there is a real need to close the education gap and high school graduation.

Precedent

Biobus mobile science laboratories improve science education access in New York City by providing programming to and employing staff from groups that are underrepresented in STEM fields. 80% of their staff is black, Hispanic, and female students. 65% of their students are African American or Latino and over two-thirds of the schools the BioBus visits serve low-income communities.

Possibility

The Lowline could expand the reach and impact of their Young Designers Program to provide free STEM classes, after-school programs and other offering to area youth. The program should further employ and train local youth and communities that are underrepresented in STEM fields to run the programs both at a Lowline location and at satellite locations in the neighborhood.



What We Heard

There is a real need for economic opportunities and quality jobs for local residents. Local residents do not always have the resources to start new businesses and pay commercial rents but have a lot of skills.

Precedent

The Underground Market in San Francisco was an incubator space for start-up food entrepreneurs to get their products to the public without the cost and delay of the myriad of regulations that have arisen around food production. While it was closed in 2012, the market strove to prove that homemade food is not dangerous food.

Possibility

A model like the Underground Market, operated and run by the Lowline, could give local residents with culinary skills from different cultures chance to sell their wares and gain popularity without large out of pocket overhead costs.

PROGRAMMING

What We Heard

Area teens and young adults have few places gather that are low-cost or free and safe. These youth could benefit from having a space for gather on the weekends and the evenings that is not dangerous.

Precedent

A multi-functional entertainment use - bowling, arcade, ping pong etc. that is low-cost and safe for residents.

Possibility

The Lowline can have entertainment facilities catered toward a youth or young adult population where area youth could get credits or tokens to use the space if they participate or volunteer in other programs offered at the Lowline or other community organizations. For example, by volunteering at a senior center or participating in a college information session, youth can earn tokens for use in the arcade or bowling alley.



A robust, inclusive and meaningful engagement strategy that informs the programming, design, construction and operation of the Lowline has the potential to result in a space and entity that capitalizes on the neighborhoods strengths and needs. The next phase of community engagement should consider the following:

- A comprehensive engagement strategy that is inclusive and transparent;
- Clear decision-making allowing community members to weigh in on key decisions;
- A realistic timeline that allows for feedback;
- Mechanisms for community to contribute to process principles;
- Better communication;
- Integration of workforce development into site development;
- Conversations that integrate a deep understanding of large neighborhood changes.

The project should also:

- Work with local service providers to more clearly identify neighborhood programming needs and explore partnership possibilities;
- Explore alternative financing models.

CONCLUSION

As the Lowline project moves forward, continued and careful attention to community needs and priorities will be essential. By exploring innovative governance and financing models in addition to programming and design, the Lowline has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the development of true community space, contributing to a vibrant, equitable and resilient Lower East Side now and well into the future.



ABOUT

The Lowline is a plan to use innovative solar technology to illuminate an historic trolley terminal on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our vision is a stunning underground park, providing a beautiful respite and a cultural attraction in one of the world's most dense, exciting urban environments.

We are inspired to use technology to improve the lives of city residents, by creating more of the green space we all need. The Lowline aims to build a new kind of public space— one that highlights the historic elements of a former trolley terminal while introducing cutting-edge solar technology and design, enabling plants and trees to grow underground.

For more information: www.thelowline.org



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www.hesterstreet.org



SPECIAL THANKS TO:

ALBOR
CAAAY
Educational Alliance
Essex Market Vendors
Grand Street Settlement House
GOLES
Henry Street Settlement House
NYC Department of Small Business Services
Small Business participants
Two Bridges Neighborhood Council
University Settlement House