

A Grassroots Bicycle Master Plan for Red Hook

Looking at precedents such as the Bikestation Coalition's facilities in California and Seattle and the McDonald's Cycle Center in Chicago, it is clear that Red Hook is in no position to be pursuing the same type of facility. These examples rely on high numbers of commuters and densely populated neighbourhoods with major transportation hubs or work centers to draw from. As a revitalizing community still establishing a critical mass of cyclists, and far from the eyes of would-be private sponsors, Red Hook must chart a new course in realizing its goal of a bicycle parking facility and infrastructure. This proposal is guided by these following principles:

- 1) maximizing self-sourced funding
- 2) integrating community training and job needs
- 3) cost minimization

self-sourced funding

"If you give a man a fish, he will feed himself for a day,
if you teach a man how to fish, he will feed himself for a lifetime."

This proverb best illustrates this design proposal's attitude. In a world where we have become accustomed to chasing this or that group for funding, and become reliant on others to provide support, it is often forgotten how self-sufficient individuals and groups can be if given encouragement.

The bicycle center will host a workshop where bike racks and other bicycle related infrastructure can be fabricated to supply Red Hook with at-cost fixtures, as well as selling items at profit to home users and other municipal jurisdictions for their needs. Servicing contracts to maintain racks for other communities could also bring in revenue.

community training

"the greater vision is to spur sustainable economic development by attracting cyclists from around New York City to enjoy the Red Hook waterfront and other neighborhood treasures"

This premise is a noble but perhaps naïve belief. While a cycling infrastructure would certainly help bring in visitors, it is the development of the attractions themselves such as the Red Hook Food vendors, clusters of new restaurants, and new businesses that will create the demand for visitors. It is dangerous to rely on recreational activities (Governor's Island cycling) that may or may not come to fruition as the basis for a major investment.

For that reason, this proposal imagines the bicycle center as an opportunity to train local residents in basic work techniques and skills such as high school level metalwork, CAD drafting, bike mechanics, and security monitoring. Built on this foundation, trainees can go on to higher level work such as furniture or metal art production for sale in the local community. As local residents go on to participate in local businesses, a true foundation for a sustainable economy can be built.

cost minimization

Simply, starting with the lowest up-front cost allows a quick start to the implementation of the master plan. Incremental additions and highly portable solutions also protect the investments made as the community evolves and needs change. This design solution is highly flexible and open-ended.