

DESIGN INTENTION

Roode Hoek which is the Dutch origin of Red Hook was named after the Dutch settlement in the 17th century first established on the red clay soil marsh land which takes after its pointed land projecting into the East River rather than the literal shape of a hook.

It is not until after the Civil War, a notable builder and railroad contractor, William Beard created one million sqft of submerged and marshland in the remote Red Hook into the resurfacing of Erin Basin. Erin Basin then became the largest man-made harbor and storage depot on the eastern seaboard. Beard also constructed many buildings in Red Hook including the Beard St. Warehouse which was part of the complex grain terminals, warehouses, wharfs and shipyards.

Beard known as a consummate 'recycler', built the warehouse from rough cut Manhattan schist salvaged from other jobs like the construction of the Harlem Railroad, the excavation of the LIRR tunnel under Atlantic Avenue and the grading and paving of Montague St. in Brooklyn Heights. As succinctly documented in '*Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan*' by Phillip Lopate, he even took advantage of 'empty' European vessels arriving in the Harbor laden with rocks for ballast. Beard would reputedly charged ship owners 50 cents a cubic yard to empty their holds into the basin before taking on cargo for return trip. The Beard St. Warehouse still rests upon this foundation of stones brought from around the world

Be it intentional or not, the history of Red Hook and its construction offers a glimpse of early concepts of sustainability and an aspect of economical practicality!

Once eloquently described by John P Missale as a 'residustrial', Red Hook represents the on going struggle of sustaining spaces between the industrial and residential. Although the industrial activities in Red Hook is much depleted but it is a task for the project to identity and redefine the new means of industrial aesthetic.

Long separated from many means of public transportation, Red Hook is still currently served with minimal means of access. Besides the two routes buses, 'a mile' away subway stations, and the recently added Ferry rides to Ikea; Red Hook are still inaccessible in many ways. Perhaps it is to this detriment that prevents Red Hook from much development. Further to its lack of accessibility, Red Hook is a highly contaminated site which has been long documented as a dumping ground for construction debris. Up to now, the reported 11,000 residents are forbid to build single family homes in afraid of unexpected toxic exposure.

Although many governmental agencies have recognized the impact of such hindrance, funding to develop sites appears to be too complex or restrictive and often provide loops holes to be explored by money driven developers to access million dollars funding without truly cleaning the site. From the very inception of the project, the master plan aims to integrate a wider scope of variables that not only deal with its existing condition but use it to resolve the many problems of Red Hooks. These variables include the impact of studying and analyzing existing drainage system in connection to Gowanus Canal. The Gowanus Canal which has been abandoned for its origin function are now a badly conceived water retention system that collects discharges mostly from storm water and combined sewer. It takes an additional discharge of mechanically pumped 'clean water' to relieve its inadequacy which in turn adds on to the burdens and cost of having to sustain a failed patch work system.

The current bicycle trails and network system which is running along the drainage system offers a possibility of integrating both functions to create an awareness of space and function which is most crucial in public education. Many non profit programs and organization including Gaia Institute, SWIM etc already identified different ways of approaching side walks and designing tree planter boxes to collect storm water. Under the PlaNYC 2030, Mayor Bloomberg had outlined many programs including stormwater management, alternate transportation, 'greening' streets, which inevitably relate to the project proposal. NYC has also been refining programs to encourage more urban agriculture settings to create a more sustainable food production and perhaps to outline a tributary area for local food productions. This can be found in many program supported by Heifer's Urban Agriculture which posses many constructive possibilities.

It is often misconceived that the green architecture has to be LEED certified. It is a good start but none the less an imperfect solution. The ability to sustain an environment is a mean of understanding local dispositions and resolving these problems by integrating local solutions. 'Local' in a sense, where the community is involved in the solution rather than being displacement.