

ENTRY 53992

Red Hook: The Bicycle Master Plan Design Competition

VELoops: A Cyclical Network for Brooklyn

Project Statement

It is not surprising that Red Hook began as a distinct village before its annexation into the 12th Ward of Brooklyn. Red Hook's unique urban development and infrastructural developments around it have allowed it to maintain a village-like atmosphere. However, as the site of a commuter bicycle route, it is too small an area to catalyze this form of sustainable transit. Therefore, our proposal begins with the District 6 community as a scale appropriate enough to develop a commuter-based bicycle route network. One considerable challenge is the complex grid of one-way streets that is interrupted at various points by significant infrastructures such as the Gowanus Canal, the Gowanus Expressway and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway which reinforce Red Hook's independent development.

We have called our proposed bicycle network VELoops. It is a series of intersecting loops that capitalize on one-way streets to safely deliver cyclists across these barriers and deposit them at three proposed Bike Lofts. At the smaller intersections of bike route loops are local hubs, or stations, that can be customized. Local hubs are developed at a neighborhood level with entrepreneurs and developers having a wide selection of enclosure profiles. The commuting biker, the leisurely biker, and the pedestrian intermingle within these destinations. The local hubs, composed of a series of sectional frames and light-weight material panels are conceived of as an urban kit-of-parts, which can be expanded or modified as the city sees fit, and as user and entrepreneurs' needs demand.

The Red Hook Loft Hub at 2nd Ave and 10th Street is nestled between the ground and the elevated subway tracks. It takes a segment of the loops and generates a social and connective 'knot' that allows bicyclists and pedestrians to connect to the Smith and 9th Avenue subway, and the 4th and 9th Avenue station. The Hub morphs access ramp and bike parking into one structure. Essentially a continuous band of bike parking, the structure thickens at various points to accommodate bike and commuter program, not unlike the local bike hubs.

The Red Hook Bike Hub is suspended from the underside of the elevated track, from steel flats spaced every three feet, and pinched together every other bay. This allows the structure to remain visually light, producing a structural 'veil' of sorts. The bicycles are stored vertically, in order to limit the amount of space they take up. The bike loft accommodates various durations of parking, from the short-term commuter to long-term bike parking. The space below the track, at street level, becomes a banded landscape of outdoor public programs: market, skate-park, playground, and an urban forest.

VELoops is a network of loops, knots and nodes which accommodate the multiple scales at which urban infrastructure operates: the street, the neighborhood and the city or district. However, VELoops seeks to move beyond purely infrastructure. By pairing bike related activities with other programs, the entire network begins to act as a locus of socialization within the entire District 6 community.