

The Brooklyn neighborhood of Red Hook poses a major problem for those residents who want to connect with the rest of their city.

People are forced to invest in a car, parking and gas, or find some very comfortable sneakers. With a long history as a major shipping hub lacking public transportation, and a recent boom in residential population, there is a serious unmet need facing Red Hook residents – a low cost, efficient, and useful means of transportation. Thus, it is vital for Red Hook to encourage and provide transportation alternatives to its inhabitants.

As witnessed in other parts of the city and in other cities worldwide, the bicycle provides a great means of conveyance from one point to another. In addition to providing a quick means of travel, bicycle transportation promotes physical health, has low operating costs, and is far less damaging to the environment. Nevertheless there are a number of downsides to bicycle commuting, such as: distance, safety, personal hygiene and security. These problems, however, can all be remedied by mixed-mode commuting – a well-established bicycle network and proper storage facilities.

The BiKe Network aims to connect Red Hook to the rest of the city through a system of bike paths, service stations and a bike loft/village beneath the Smith & 9th St. subway station. Acting as a hub for the bicycle network, the loft/village serves as safe place where commuters can accomplish errands, relax, and socialize. Twenty four hour program can include bike storage, access to the subway, a full service laundromat, post office, bar and a grocery store. By inter-mixing these various commercial/social businesses, the site would see activity at all hours of the day, helping to maintain a safe atmosphere.

To help attract a mixture of desirable retail and service businesses to the loft/village, the Brooklyn Brewery would be approached to share the space between 2nd and 3rd avenues. By allowing half of the block to be occupied by their brewery operation and the other half the village, a process of neighborhood revitalization will be set in motion, encouraging other businesses to follow suit and residents to enjoy the new attractions. Additionally, the inclusion of such a business as a core aspect to the site would help retain manufacturing jobs in the area, further setting into motion the revitalization process.

Extending out from the loft/village are a series of bike paths that not only connect the various areas of Red Hook, but also connect to the surrounding bicycle path network, creating direct connections with Manhattan, Prospect park and the areas in between. This interconnected network helps to promote bike usage amongst those currently wary – seeing city riding as dangerous, due to the lack of connection between the network of paths and bike lanes. Along the newly created paths, a series of service stations will be strategically set-up to aid in various inconveniences which can occur while bike riding. These service stations are to be arranged in a modular system, allowing for: light and shelter providing security and cover at night and in inclement weather; repair stations providing bike pumps, inner tube vending, and instructions on how to perform typical repair; and bike storage. In order to help bike riders locate these service stations, the typical bike path icon has been modified to show the direction of the nearest station and various points of interest, at constant intervals along the paths.

While the Bike Network and village/loft succeeds in providing Red Hook residents with an affordable, eco-friendly, and convenient mode of transit, it does much more – instilling a sense of community, urban renewal and aesthetics to the neighborhood. The Bike Network and village/loft will also significantly improve the connection of Red Hook to the surrounding areas and will help foster a sustainable neighborhood as a precedent for the rest of the city.