

Queens West (Stage II)

Long Island City, NY

Client: Queens West Development

Completion: Estimated 2008

Cost: \$40,000,000



This extensive urban waterfront park and infrastructure project is the second stage in an ongoing effort to revitalize the previously neglected Queens riverfront. Located along the East River in the Hunter's Point neighborhood, the Queens West mixed-use development and parkland will serve as an important destination in New York City by establishing stronger connections within Long Island City, and better views between Manhattan and Queens.

Design Objectives

1. Develop an appropriate design for the site's unique environmental conditions
2. Provide a continuous publicly accessible waterfront promenade
3. Preserve unique or circumstantial water's edge conditions
4. Protect, enhance and demarcate view corridors.
5. Integrate the iconic Pepsi-Cola sign and public art into the park design
6. Utilize sustainable design strategies including designing for a 40-year life cycle, specifying "green" materials and utilizing alternative energy technologies

As the project's prime consultant, ABB is leading a team of ten design, engineering, and environmental professionals from the site investigation/pre-schematic design phase through construction administration. The development will include marine structures, public streets and utilities, and a total of nine acres of parkland. The design for marine structures includes reconstruction of existing bulkheads, new relieving platforms, and enhancement of an existing cove. The scope includes providing design and engineering for all public utilities including new streets and stormwater outfalls. Park development includes providing complete designs for a waterfront park, an inland park between 5th Street and Center Boulevard at 47th Avenue, and for publicly accessible private parcels within or adjacent to the park areas. Design coordination for residential development has been ongoing to ensure that a cohesive, integrated design is achieved. In addition, ABB is working with project consultants and contractors to coordinate all aspects of design involving site remediation.

ABB was responsible for securing DEC and ACOE waterfront permits for Stage 2 and Stage 4, and preliminary approval for Stage 3. In conjunction with the application for waterfront permits, ABB designed on-site mitigation in the form of a created wetland at the cove, and developed a maintenance and monitoring plan to ensure its success. The ABB team analyzed the feasibility of incorporating a variety of sustainable design strategies in the park for both Stage 2 and 4 and is providing design and engineering services for the use of "green materials" and photovoltaic systems in Stage 2.

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Design Approach

ABB initiated the design process by developing a thorough understanding of site conditions and analyzing the existing site-wide schematic plan. Early on in the design process, it was determined that the planned riverfront street could be eliminated without having an impact upon either vehicular circulation or site access. As such, the ROW area could be treated as park open space, and incorporated into the overall park design to expand the waterfront park area. Through a cooperative effort on the part of the client and the residential development design team, ABB was able to break free of the constraints of the rectilinear parcelization, allowing for the creation of a dynamic, free-flowing and fully integrated park design.

ABB's approach allowed for a free exchange of design ideas among all team members and also for more specific and concentrated collaborative efforts. This approach led to the development of thoroughly integrated architectural components, lighting features, water features, furnishings and signage that respond to the spatial and topographic variations of the park.

Key Features

Connecting to the recently completed Peninsula Park (the last phase of Stage 1), Stage 2 includes a continuous waterfront esplanade that totals 2,100 linear feet. Features include an 8,000 square foot children's play area, a large central lawn area, a naturalized area with seating platforms that will overlook a reconstructed cove and a created wetland, and a community garden with an arbor and trellis wall. A variety of passive spaces have been designed to support disparate uses and provide various seating options; they include a raised overlook with hammocks, benches under cover of a shade structure in the play area, Adirondack-style chairs in the naturalized area, chaise lounges, individual chairs and various types of bench along the esplanade, moveable café-style tables and chairs near the vendor kiosk at the play area and community garden, and informal block seats within the land form that defines the central green and looks out across the East River to the Manhattan skyline. The design for the inland park includes approximately 40,000 square feet of multi-purpose field with built-in spectator seating, a picnic grove and an adjacent open lawn area.

Several architectural elements were designed to support park functions, including a vendor kiosk, a tensile fabric shade structure, entry structures with integrated informational and wayfinding signage, and amenities such as drinking fountains. Two sixty-foot tall custom-designed light pylons will frame the view at the terminus of Center Boulevard and provide necessary light levels at the northwest corner of the esplanade. A gatehouse building will house necessary electrical and mechanical equipment and provide storage at the sports field.

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Sustainable Design Initiative

A significant project requirement was the incorporation of sustainable design strategies. ABB performed feasibility studies on the use of these strategies including the use of “green” materials and alternative energy sources such as wind turbines, photovoltaics and geothermal wells. As a result of these studies, the park will employ a photovoltaic panel system that will track the sun (designed for the vendor kiosk), and a stationary system on the sportsfield gatehouse buildings. Additionally, materials research led to the use of concrete pavers that contain recycled glass aggregate, a new “green” material, in lieu of more traditional asphalt pavers.

