

A REPORT BY THE FLOYD BENNETT FIELD BLUE RIBBON PANEL

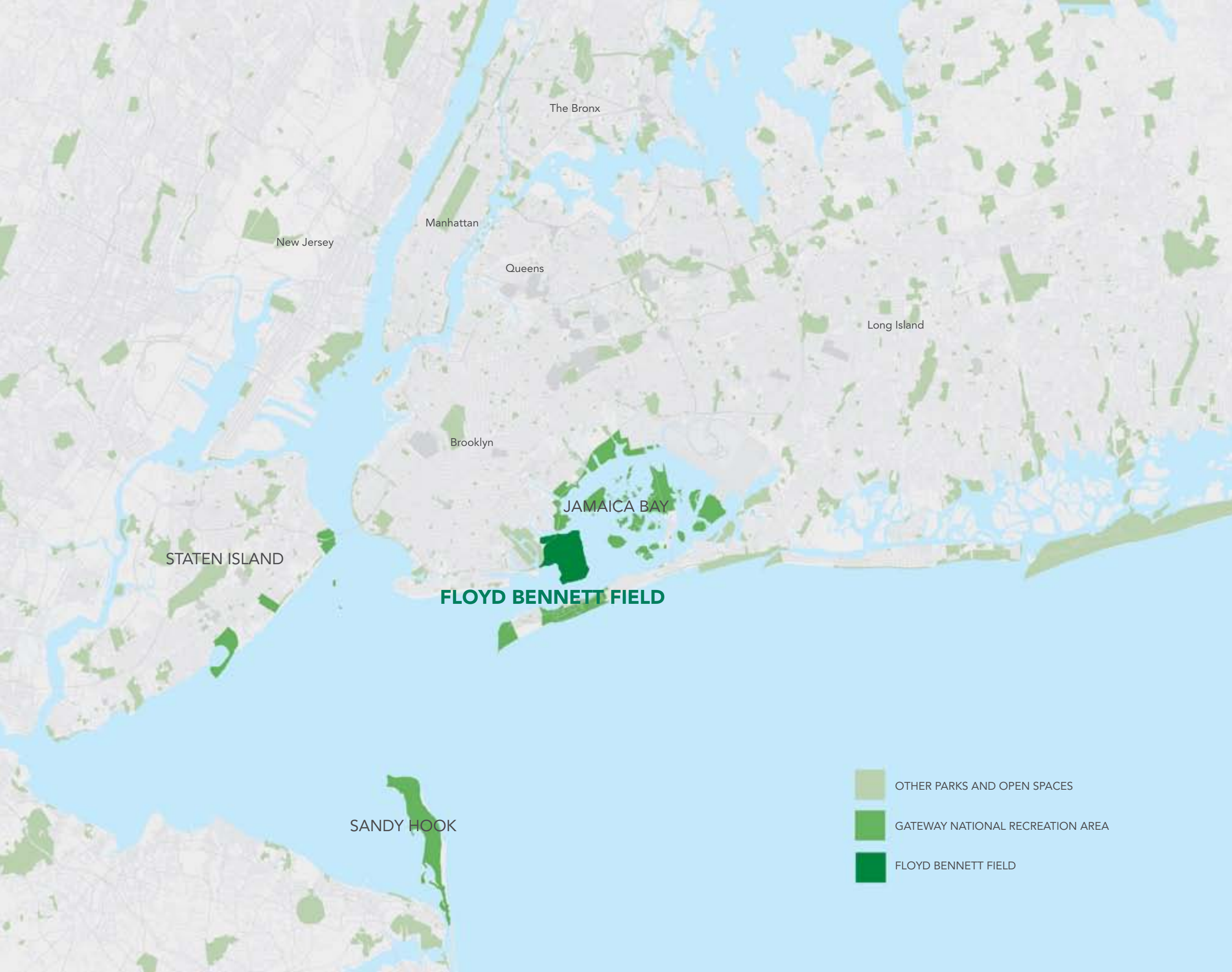
FLOYD

BENNETT

FIELD

THE NEXT JEWEL IN NEW YORK'S URBAN PARK CROWN





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New Yorkers are clamoring for more opportunities to enjoy parks, and maintaining and expanding our quality of life requires us to answer that need.

- PlaNYC

## DEAR SENATOR SCHUMER & CONGRESSMAN WEINER,

It is our great pleasure, as members of the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel, to submit our recommendations.

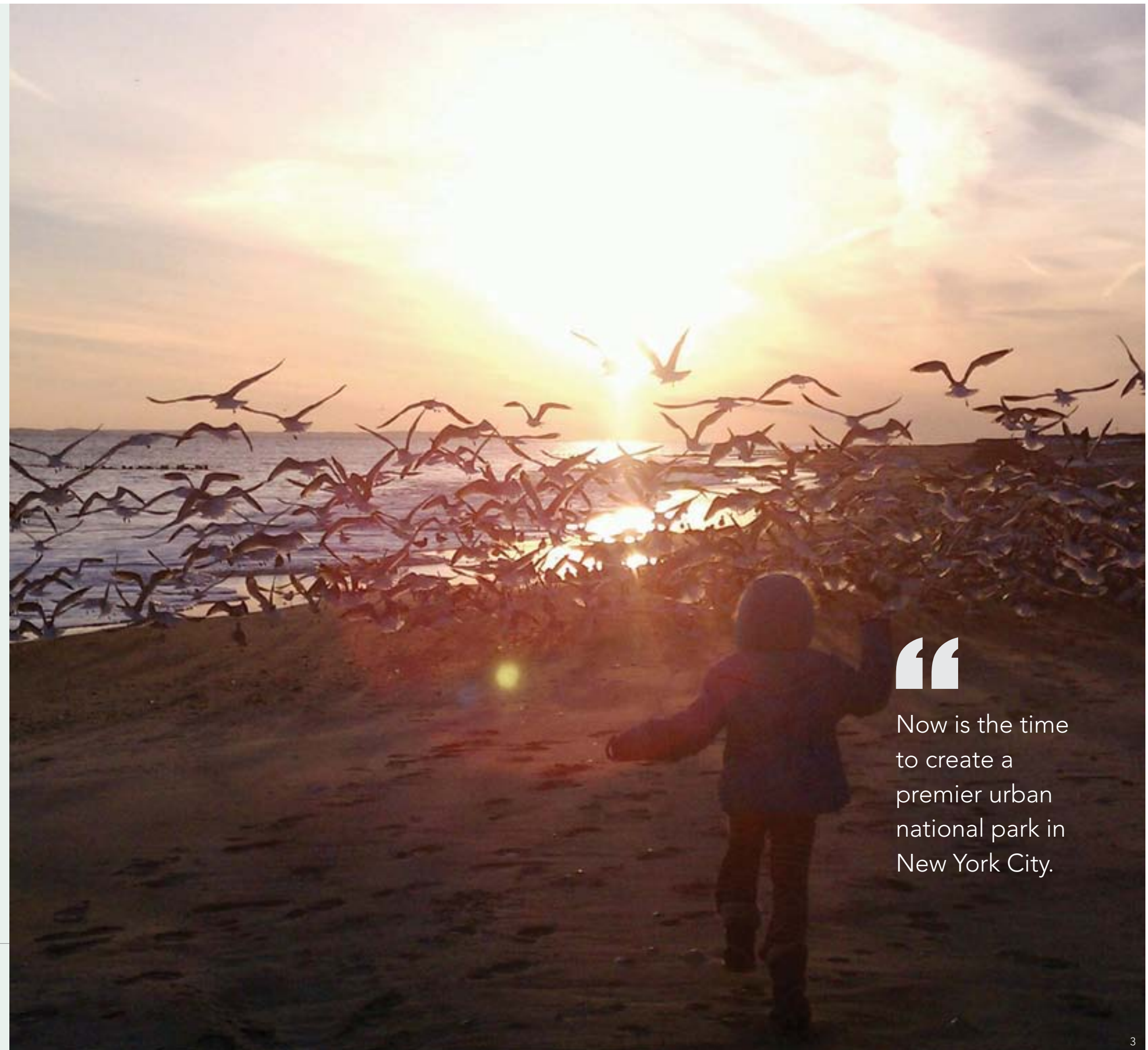
Now is the time to create a premier urban national park in New York City. This report provides the next steps to realize the tremendous potential of Floyd Bennett Field. Our recommendations will help implement the goals of the Mayor's PlaNYC, the President's America's Great Outdoors Report, and the Comprehensive Restoration Plan for New York Harbor prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Port Authority.

This past year the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel met with community groups, local businesses, numerous non-profits, agencies, and elected leaders to develop a better understanding of the site's potential. We convened workgroups on park vision, education, restoration, infrastructure, and management partnerships. ***This comprehensive process led to the development of the recommendations for creating a vibrant urban national park with broad public support.***

We look to you for your leadership as we begin to implement these recommendations, particularly with respect to determining a new management structure, creating a new park design, and identifying public and private sources of capital funding and longer-term operations support for Floyd Bennett Field. With champions for this park in Congress, focused efforts by the Department of Interior and the National Park Service, and the currently strong upwelling of local interest in this park, Gateway National Recreation Area can finally become a truly iconic urban national park, with Floyd Bennett Field at its heart.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Gateway National Recreation Area, and in particular Floyd Bennett Field as the gem at its center. We look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve our shared vision of an exemplary urban national park for the region and the country.

*Floyd Bennett Field can connect millions of our region's children to the natural world and our national parks.*



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Now is the time to create a premier urban national park in New York City.



For every dollar spent on a national park, roughly four dollars are invested in the local economy.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Americans love their parks, and New York City's more than eight million residents, living and working in the densest city in the United States, especially need their parks. Today we have the unique opportunity to develop a new flagship national park for New York by revitalizing Gateway National Recreation Area. This unpolished gem, with Floyd Bennett Field at its heart, is ready to be brought alive as the great urban national park it was intended to be, elevated to shine as the next jewel in the emerald crown of New York City's great park system.

As a premier urban national park in New York City, Floyd Bennett Field could, and should, be a destination for urban outdoor recreation, ecological restoration, aviation history, and place-based education for the residents of southern Brooklyn and Queens and visitors from around the world. If restored, supported, and managed in new and collaborative ways, Floyd Bennett Field

could also support local infrastructure needs, create jobs for the region's residents, spur the local economy, and connect millions of young people to the outdoors and the National Park System. Gateway is also uniquely positioned to facilitate community building on a local, regional and national scale. Surrounded by established and newly developing immigrant communities representing dozens of countries, the park can play a vital role in introducing millions of the country's newest citizens to our National Park System.

In the past decade, numerous disparate efforts have been made to articulate Gateway's potential and define an exciting vision for its future. Recognizing that now is the time for action, Senator Charles Schumer and Congressman Anthony Weiner convened the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel. After much deliberation and public discussion, the Panel makes the following recommendations:

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Floyd Bennett Field could, and should, be a destination for urban outdoor recreation, ecological restoration, aviation history, and place-based education.

### DESIGN



### ACCESS



### ECOLOGY



### EDUCATION



### PARTNERSHIP



#### Develop a coherent overall design:

- Create a new design for Floyd Bennett Field and its surroundings.
- Make Floyd Bennett Field look and feel like a national park.
- Embrace the site's unstructured character while restoring its open space.
- Preserve and herald the site's aviation history.
- Improve access to the waterfront and water.
- Expand the recreational and cultural programming.

#### Improve transportation and access:

- Improve the arrival experience and circulation within Floyd Bennett Field.
- Create additional public transit access to the park via bus and ferry through pilot programs and marketing.
- Enhance the bicycling and pedestrian experience.
- Create a new ferry dock at Gateway Marina.

#### Support ecological restoration:

- Implement the Dead Horse Bay Restoration Project as identified in the Army Corps Jamaica Bay Feasibility Study.
- Remove or bury concrete pads, remove defunct bulkheads and runways, and remove numerous abandoned buildings.
- Rehabilitate and enhance the grasslands.
- Restore the North 40 natural area.

#### Develop a comprehensive education and interpretation program:

- Establish a year-round, state of the art education facility for use by visitors, school groups, academic institutions, nonprofits, and others.
- Create an expanded camping experience from eco-lodges to RV access and campsites.

#### Establish a partnership structure to begin and facilitate change by 2016, honoring the National Park Service Centennial celebration:

- Launch a third party entity to manage the site with joint involvement of New York City and the National Park Service.
- Structure the partnership to allow for later inclusion of Fort Tilden and Riis Beach.

“

Now is the time for action.

## THE GREAT URBAN NATIONAL PARK OPPORTUNITY

Floyd Bennett Field's 1440 acres represent the next great park opportunity within New York City, a rare chance to provide a huge recreational and historic park in the midst of the densest city in the United States. The park is twice the size of Central Park and is an untapped resource for the 200,000 people who live within 3 miles of the park, the 5 million residents of Brooklyn and Queens, and the more than 8 million people of New York City. The park should be a destination park for the 21 million residents of the tri-state area and visitors from beyond.

Congress created Gateway in 1972 to serve as a publicly accessible national park. Stretching across the entrance to New York Harbor, Gateway is intended to serve as an entry point to the national park experience. Its enabling legislation noted, "this will be *the first Federal recreation area in the heart of an urban complex* and it will bring the national park program closer to the people than ever before...(this) can be a place for all people and can serve the recreation needs of huge crowds if properly developed and administered."<sup>1</sup>

With your leadership and support we can create the great urban national park originally envisioned in 1972.

### Floyd Bennett Field as the Premier Great Urban National Park

America's national parks tangibly memorialize our country, preserving not only open space, but ecologically significant landscapes, historically important stories and even a sense of nationhood. A great urban national park serves these functions within the context of its surrounding urban fabric, infrastructure, and diversity.

*Floyd Bennett Field should be the Nation's premier urban national park.* Its vast open space, 1440 acres, and World War II era structures provide a unique window into New York City's spectacular cultural and ecological history. Rich with Native American, Dutch Colonial, and municipal and military aviation history, Floyd Bennett Field's vistas, runways, historic hangars and control tower call out for interpretation and adaptive re-use. Nowhere else in the urban region can one experience such vast panoramas of open grassland and varied waterfront landscapes, while also flying model airplanes on actual runways and visiting historic hangars and control towers. The natural and historical significance of the park should be recognized and celebrated.

1440  
Acres

5 million people  
in Brooklyn & Queens

100,000  
schoolchildren  
within 5 miles

With over five miles of waterfront, wetlands, grasslands, maritime forests, and beaches, Floyd Bennett Field has space for fishing, boating, camping and birding, outdoor recreational activities rare in the surrounding urban landscape.

These assets will help meet the needs of the city and the recreation and activity goals of national initiatives such as the First Lady's Let's Move program, President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative, as well as Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC.

By 2025, 85% of Americans will live in metropolitan areas, and they will need access to natural areas more than ever. Encouraging children to explore its natural landscape is critical to the long-term success not just of this park, but of all parks.

Today's children will be tomorrow's stewards and champions of not only Gateway but national parks in general. As noted by Louise Chawla, "Environmental leaders... attributed their commitment to a combination of two sources in childhood or adolescence, many hours spent outdoors 'keenly remembered' in wild or semi-wild places and a mentoring adult who taught respect for nature."

At the center of a metropolitan region with 21 million residents and 50 million visitors annually, Floyd Bennett Field is an ideal site for the National Park Service to convey its message and build its constituency for the next 100 years.

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It is scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character is favorable to health and vigor.

Frederick Law  
Olmsted



### Economic Benefits of a Great Urban Park

A successful park must provide opportunities for recreation and socialization and integrate with the region's infrastructure. Great urban parks have long been recognized as being more than just places for outdoor recreation or sanctuaries for important natural and cultural resources; they are also generators of local economic development.

#### Creating a new urban park at Floyd Bennett Field will:

##### Grow the local economy

A fully developed Floyd Bennett Field will provide significant short and long term economic benefits to the neighborhood and the city.

- Turning Floyd Bennett Field into an iconic urban national park will, conservatively, generate an estimated 2,800 to 8,400 temporary and permanent jobs, and aggressive models suggest creating up to 16,500 jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- The value of surrounding real estate in Brooklyn and Queens will increase as the park is improved. It is estimated that homes adjacent to well-managed parks gain up to 20% in value, and even those farther away gain 5%.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2010 there were a total of 48.7 million tourists to New York City. These visitors contributed \$31 billion to the region's economy.

**\$1,200  
dollars**

*Average tax savings to each New York City household as a result of travel & tourism*

**304  
thousand**

*Total New York City jobs supported by visitor spending (2009)*



Creating a new urban park at Floyd Bennett Field will grow the local economy.

*Urban national parks provide jobs in the community, offer learning and recreation opportunities for visitors, and serve as destinations for cultural events.*



(continued)

### Get NYC residents moving, meeting public health goals

Increased recreation at Floyd Bennett Field would directly address the Obama Administration's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's PlaNYC, and the First Lady's Let's Move initiative. Gateway offers vast, open, free recreational space that is easily accessed by millions of people. **There are 100,000 school children living within five miles of the park.**

- Investing in and activating Floyd Bennett Field will meet AGO's goals of Connecting Americans to the Great Outdoors & Preserving the Great Outdoors.
- Increasing access to, and programming at, Floyd Bennett Field will help facilitate the three prongs of the Let's Move initiative—Active Families, Active Schools and Active Communities.
- 57.9% of adults living in New York City are obese; encouraging and facilitating physical activity is a key part of improving the health of New York City residents.
- Let's Move calls for more exercise, and more unstructured exercise outdoors for children. Gateway offers the type of open and unstructured space that children today are rarely able to enjoy.

### Offer outstanding educational resources for adults and school children

There are more than 1.2 million school-age children in New York City who could benefit from ranger-led interpretative programs or regular school sponsored field trips. Floyd Bennett Field can ac-

commodate a wide assortment of novice and expert naturalists and scientists studying everything from astronomy to zoology.

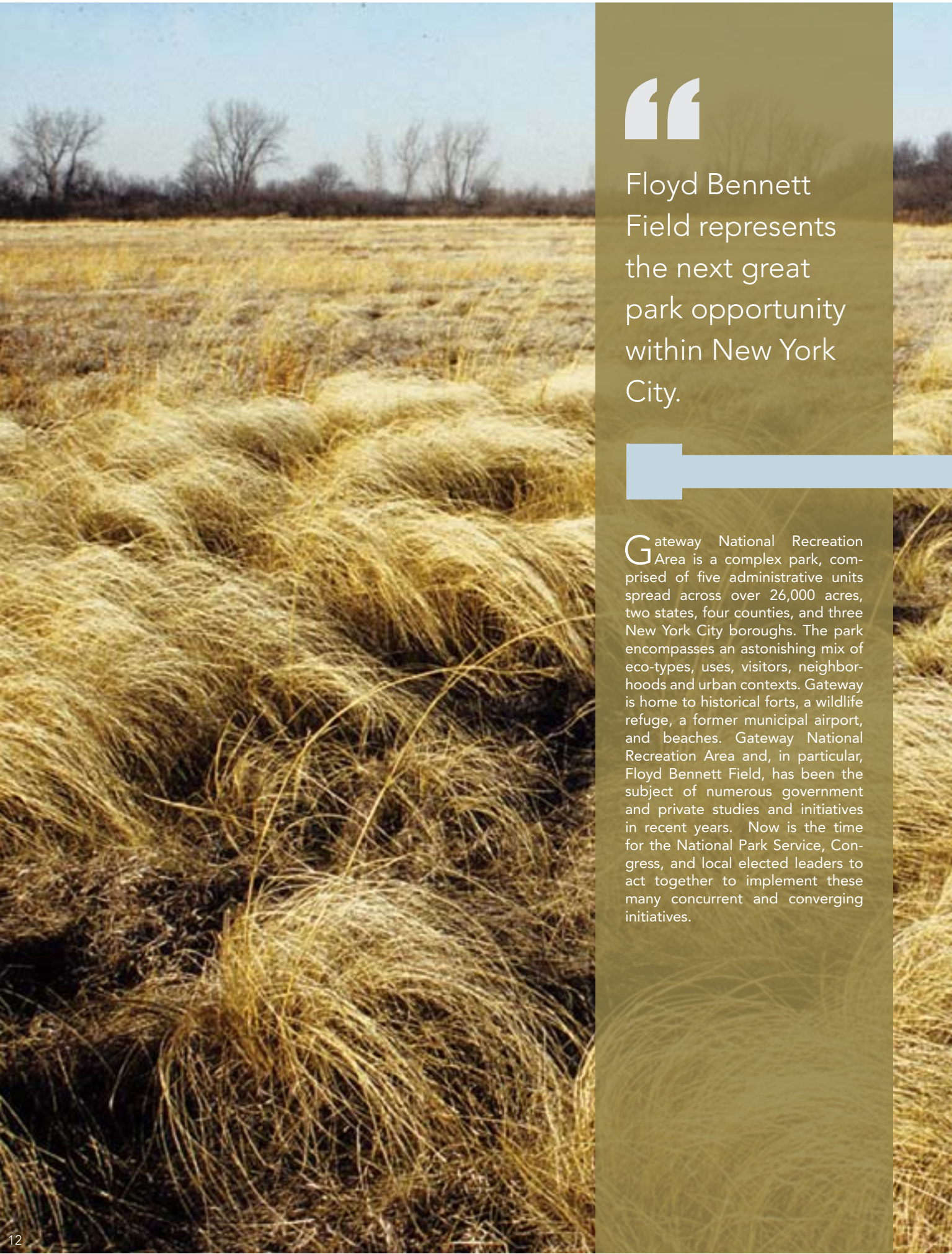
### Support Municipal Infrastructure and Climate Adaptation

Floyd Bennett Field serves now as a crucial link between fragments of our remnant ecosystems, and its vegetation scrubs the air and reduces the urban heat effect. In fact, Floyd Bennett Field could become the model green urban national park and potentially host municipal infrastructure supporting New York City DEP restoration goals and the National Park Service's Climate Friendly Parks goals. Demonstrations projects could include:

- Solar panels generating up to 10-12 watts/ft<sup>2</sup> x 2.5 hours/day;
- A new Blue Belt absorbing over 1M gallons/year/acre of storm water where hard surface areas are removed; and
- Demonstration of new technologies like tidal energy generation.

### Provide opportunities for community interaction

Floyd Bennett Field can offer the space for communities to be together for block parties, picnics, and community events to strengthen our national identity. Parks are common ground for children from different neighborhoods.



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Floyd Bennett Field represents the next great park opportunity within New York City.

Gateway National Recreation Area is a complex park, comprised of five administrative units spread across over 26,000 acres, two states, four counties, and three New York City boroughs. The park encompasses an astonishing mix of eco-types, uses, visitors, neighborhoods and urban contexts. Gateway is home to historical forts, a wildlife refuge, a former municipal airport, and beaches. Gateway National Recreation Area and, in particular, Floyd Bennett Field, has been the subject of numerous government and private studies and initiatives in recent years. Now is the time for the National Park Service, Congress, and local elected leaders to act together to implement these many concurrent and converging initiatives.

## THE TIME FOR GATEWAY IS NOW

2004

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) opens a Northeast regional office to help lead the effort to elevate Gateway National Recreation Area (Gateway) and help it become a great urban national park.

2005

The National Park Service creates the position of Commissioner, National Parks of New York Harbor, and helps launch the National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy to support the national parks in New York City.

2006

A Zogby International poll finds that the majority of the area's residents desire an iconic national park in the region, but nearly half of them are unaware of and have never visited Gateway.

2009

NPCA and Regional Plan Association (RPA) release the report "The Path Forward: Public Input on the Future of Gateway National Recreation Area," synthesizing the results of the Envisioning Gateway competition and all subsequent public outreach and feedback. Recommendations include revealing visitor opportunities, connecting and expanding access, integrating climate change, and re-naturing Jamaica Bay.

2008

NPCA, Van Alen Institute and Columbia University hold the Envisioning Gateway design competition drawing over 200 submissions from 20 countries re-envisioning the future of Floyd Bennett Field. The competition raised the profile of the park and articulated the benchmarks by which all stakeholders view the site.

2007

NPCA's State of the Parks report finds that Gateway's cultural resources score just 46 out of 100, and its natural resources score just 53 out of 100, the lowest rating of all 27 parks assessed to date.

2010

The National Parks Second Century Commission charts a vision for our National Park System's second century of service focusing on building a national community and sustaining the health of the planet.

Senator Charles Schumer and Congressman Anthony Weiner announce the creation of the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel.



## CONCURRENT EFFORTS

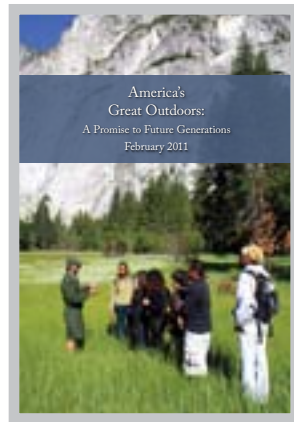
### General Management Plan for Gateway National Recreation Area

In 2008, the National Park Service launched a new General Management Plan for Gateway National Recreation Area, including Floyd Bennett Field. This once-a-generation effort will set out the broad agenda for Gateway for the next thirty years. The plan identifies the key values for the park and sets out strategies for best ensuring that these are protected, enhanced and interpreted as part of the visitor experience.



### America's Great Outdoors

In 2010, President Barack Obama released his report on America's Great Outdoors (AGO), an initiative to address the challenges, opportunities, and innovations surrounding modern-day land conservation and the importance of reconnecting Americans to the outdoors. The initiative aims to deliver quality outdoor experiences to every young person and connect all Americans to their natural and cultural heritage.



### PlaNYC 2030

In 2011, the City of New York released the update of PlaNYC 2030, the ambitious 30-year sustainability plan to make the city a cleaner and healthier place to live. The goals, many of which align with a greener future at Gateway, include ensuring that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park; opening 90% of our waterways for recreation by reducing water pollution and preserving our natural areas; and providing cleaner, more reliable power for every New Yorker by upgrading our energy infrastructure.



As part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, we look forward to working with the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to enhance the largely undiscovered beauty of Gateway National Recreation Area.

*Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg*

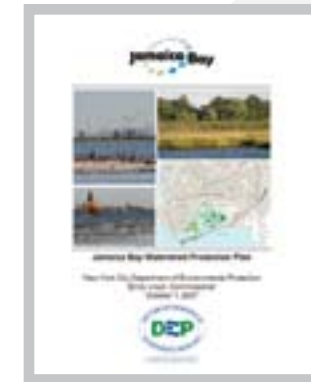
### Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the New York – New Jersey Harbor

In February 2010, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey released a Comprehensive restoration Plan for the New York – New Jersey Harbor (CRP). Developed over 15 years, it includes specific restoration plans for Dead Horse Bay, as well as more than 50 other wetland restoration, and other, projects in and around Jamaica Bay.



### Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan

Released in February 2011, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection's Strategy 2011 – 2014 has laid out long term improvement plans for the Jamaica Bay Watershed. Goals include continuing to improve water quality in New York Harbor to facilitate new development and increased waterfront access for all New Yorkers, and restoring natural systems that can reduce pollution while providing recreational, habitat, and climate adaptation benefits.



### Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan

In March 2011, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn released Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, a 10-year vision for the future of the city's 520 miles of shoreline, including a sustainable framework for more water transport, increased public access to the waterfront through parks and recreation, habitat restoration, and economic opportunities to help make the water part of New Yorkers' everyday lives.



### Gateway as the model for America's Great Outdoors Initiative

In 2016, the nation will mark the Centennial of the National Park Service. In celebration of this anniversary, the National Parks Second Century Commission charted a vision for our national parks' second century of service to the nation. Recommendations focused on how the National Park Service can advance society's most critical objectives: building a national community and sustaining the health of the planet. The report highlighted the urgent need to connect urban, underserved communities to the national park experience, and highlighted the role that urban national parks can play in that solution. In 2011, President Barack Obama released his report on America's Great Outdoors (AGO). Under the leadership of the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, AGO is a 21st-century conservation and recreation agenda that addresses the challenges facing our nation.

*Now is the time to act together to implement these many concurrent and converging initiatives and make Gateway the great park Americans deserve and need.*



The Panel held seven public meetings and stakeholder discussions. At our public meetings, and on our panel website, over 280 community members voiced their opinions on the future of Floyd Bennett Field. They expressed their appreciation for its potential as a vital open space and voiced their concerns regarding maintaining currently existing programs such as biking, kayaking, birding and model airplane flying. Members of the public also requested additional cultural and recreational uses, the maintenance and activation of the historic structures, the preservation and restoration of the natural environment, and improvements to the educational facilities. They felt Floyd Bennett Field was big enough to accommodate a wide range of uses.

*Floyd Bennett Field is home to many diverse uses and users. Today, people visit Floyd Bennett Field to camp, bird watch, fish, restore historic aircraft, kayak, ride bikes, learn about aviation history, wind surf, watch bike races, play hockey and soccer, stroll along quiet nature paths, horseback ride, and more.*



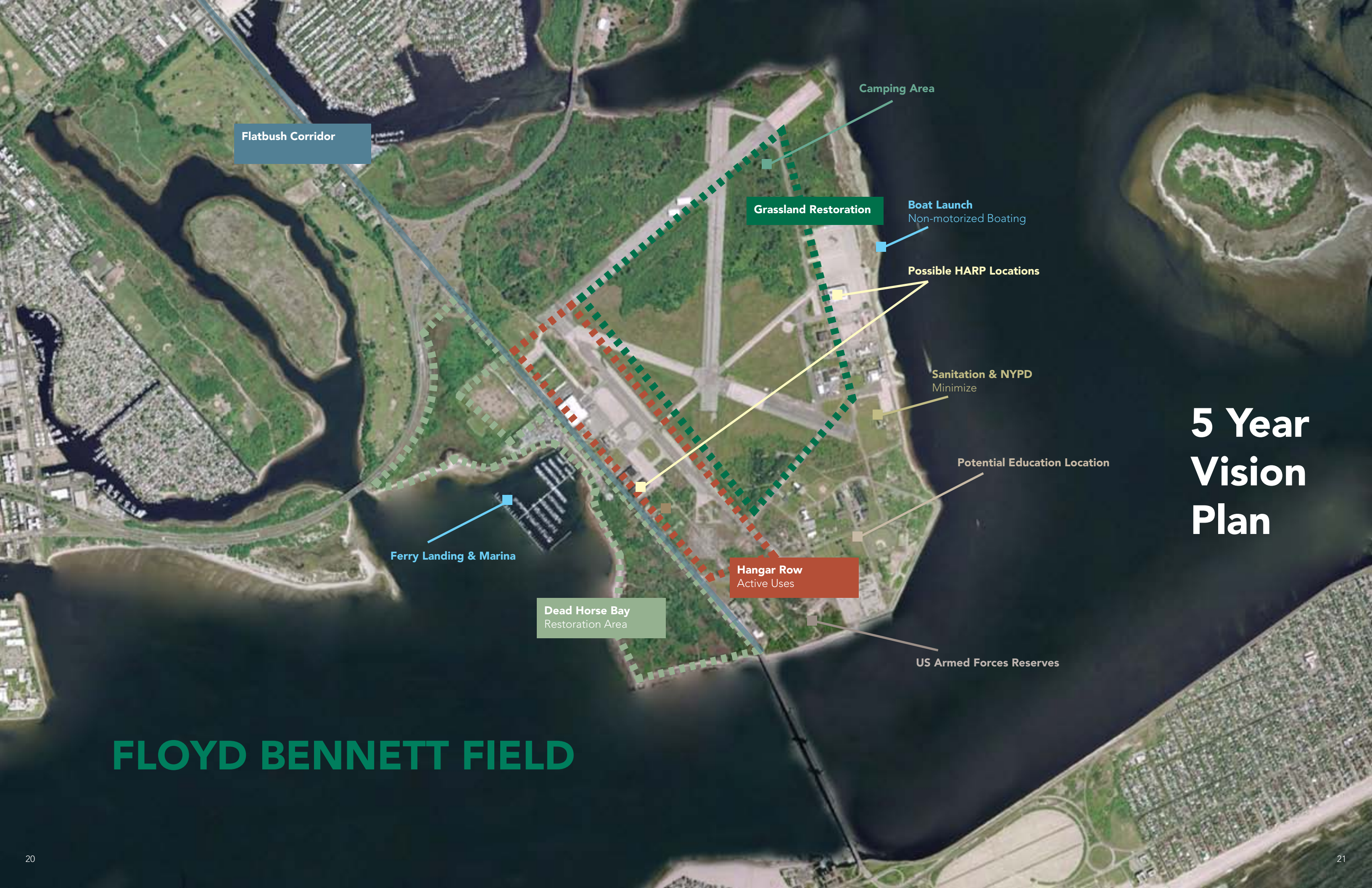
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Part of what is wonderful about Floyd is how open and unstructured it is. If you want to do something in New York City, there is room at Floyd.

*community member*

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS





Flatbush Corridor

Grassland Restoration

Camping Area

Boat Launch  
Non-motorized Boating

Possible HARP Locations

Sanitation & NYPD  
Minimize

Potential Education Location

Hangar Row  
Active Uses

Dead Horse Bay  
Restoration Area

Ferry Landing & Marina

US Armed Forces Reserves

# 5 Year Vision Plan

# FLOYD BENNETT FIELD

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Gateway National Recreation Area is a part of what makes New York the greatest city in the world. As one of the country's largest urban parks, it is home to immense natural beauty and an incredible variety of recreational opportunities – but we can make it better.”

*Congressman  
Anthony Weiner*





## RE-ENVISIONING GATEWAY: A NEW PARK DESIGN

We recommend establishing a new comprehensive vision for Floyd Bennett Field guided by the creation of a holistic design for the site. The vision might be launched as a competition, as at Flight 93, St. Louis Arch, or Fresh Kills, or simply by directly commissioning a new design with public comments and participation. The goal of this new design is to make Floyd Bennett Field look and feel like a national park. The design will:

### I. Embrace and restore the site's open space.

- Enhance the central part of Floyd Bennett Field's open fields. The runways should be referenced or memorialized in the design of the park. The new park plan should reveal the memory of these aviation allees in a way that also preserves the wide vistas and surrounding grasslands.
- The grasslands, forested areas, wetlands and surrounding Jamaica Bay provide an unparalleled opportunity to preserve and provide to visitors a glimpse of the region's great ecological heritage. These remaining ecological assets should be fully protected and restored.

### II. Preserve and herald the site's aviation history.

- Complete the work on the Ryan Center control tower and add exhibits.
- The remaining derelict hangars should be rehabilitated and repurposed as flexible multi-purpose spaces, possibly as space for historic aircraft storage or viewing or other commercial uses.
- In the near-term, Hangar B should be maintained for the Historic Aircraft Restoration Project (HARP), in the long-

term, aviation activity should be relocated to Hangar Row, serving as a visible draw to the site.

### III. Improve the arrival experience and circulation within the site.

- The existing entrances along Flatbush Avenue should be improved, with a major entrance created at the Control Tower visitor center.
- Signage, pull-outs, and way-side exhibits should be established throughout the site, particularly along Belt Parkway and Flatbush Avenue.
- An internal trail system should connect the Jamaica Bay Greenway and Gateway sites around Jamaica Bay.
- A bus shelter on the east side of Flatbush Avenue should be built to serve current bus riders.
- The location of stops should be realigned with new destinations.

### IV. Create better access to the waterfront and the water.

- Establish a walkway/trail system that provides enhanced access to the waterfront.
- Ensure enough space behind the Marine Corps site for continuity of the trail system and water access.
- Establish a dock for ferry access at the Gateway Marina to the west and refurbish the kayak launch on the eastern shore.
- Explore creation of a concession supporting non-motorized and passive water use (canoes, kayaks, etc.) on the eastern shore, connected to Camp Tamarack.



The grasslands, forested areas, wetlands and Jamaica Bay provide an unparalleled opportunity to preserve the region's great ecological heritage.

*The entrance and arrival experience at Floyd Bennett Field must be improved.*



*(continued)*

### V. Remove inappropriate uses.

- The current use of Floyd Bennett Field by the U.S. Marine Corps and the City of New York's Departments of Sanitation and Police are not compatible with the national park mission. In the short-term, these users should reduce their footprints, in particular by phasing out the Department of Sanitation and the New York Police Department driver training activities.
- Establish a moratorium preventing any inappropriate uses.

### VI. Expand the recreational and cultural programming at Floyd Bennett Field.

- Cultural events, concerts, art festivals and pop-up markets should bring in new users, connect them with other aspects of Floyd Bennett Field, and build a larger constituency for the greater park. Such activity should be concentrated along Hangar Row and on existing hard surfaces.
- Provide enhanced and expanded camping experiences to connect New York City's school children and other residents to world class urban camping opportunities.
- New programs should seek to be self-sufficient, reflect the values of the park, the cultural diversity of New York City, and should build on existing uses and constituencies including: historic aircraft restoration; flying model planes; stewardship of the native habitat and plantings; birdwatching, hiking, and fishing.
- Establish policies to ensure that new uses or events support the park's values and help meet the marketing, transportation, and revenue needs of the site.



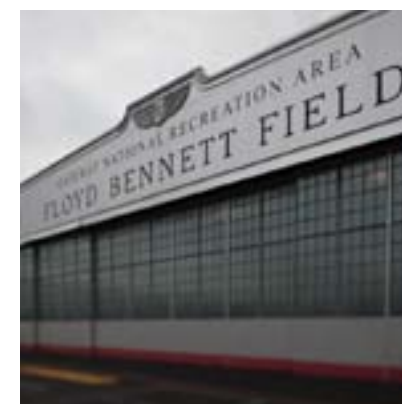
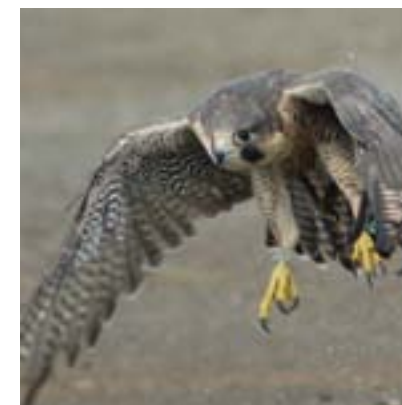
The goal of this new design is to make Floyd Bennett Field look and feel like a national park.

*(Upper Left) Peregrine falcons, a native and endangered species, call Floyd Bennett Field home.*

*(Upper Right) New York City's first municipal airport, Floyd Bennett Field boasts expansive historic runways.*

*(Lower Left) Floyd Bennett Field's historic hangars should be refurbished and open to the public for use.*

*(Lower Right) Visitors should be able to easily access the more than five miles of waterfront.*





## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation to and from Floyd Bennett Field is perhaps the park's greatest challenge. The Panel has identified several ways of making getting to the park easier and more enjoyable.

**I. Increase public transit access to Floyd Bennett Field through marketing, pilot programs and increased bus service.**

- Establish and carefully evaluate a series of pilot services and marketing programs. These could include: the MTA's metro card promotions; joint marketing in the transit system for special events at the site; securing support for an express beach bus to complement regular city service during peak hours and summer months; and increasing Q 35 bus service down Flatbush Avenue for special events.

**II. Establish a dock for ferry access at the Gateway Marina for inner-Jamaica Bay ferries and market programs at Floyd Bennett Field to commuter and seasonal ferry users at Riis Beach.**

- The marina opposite Floyd Bennett Field should become a stop for excursion ferries, linking the site to destinations within Jamaica Bay and the NY/NJ Harbor.
- There is great interest within New York City for creating a harbor ferry loop.

**III. Improve the pedestrian experience along Flatbush Avenue and within Floyd Bennett Field.**

- Well-marked walking and bicycling paths.
- Re-align park entrances on Flatbush Avenue.

- As the site becomes more popular, a jitney service looping through Floyd Bennett Field should be considered to improve internal circulation to the park attractions.

**IV. Promote bicycling to and around Floyd Bennett Field.**

- Enhancing the Jamaica Bay Greenway by improving connections in the Rockaways and creating bike trails in Floyd Bennett Field will better connect the site to other NPS and City park sites and the City's greenway network.
- Better marketing of existing services and programs, such as the bike rental at Aviator Sports and the use of a portion of the tarmac for bicycle races or other events in the future, would help attract new users.

**V. Accommodate critical infrastructural needs such as the utility corridor on Flatbush Avenue as well as other uses that are necessary for the region's infrastructure and advantageous to the park's mission.**

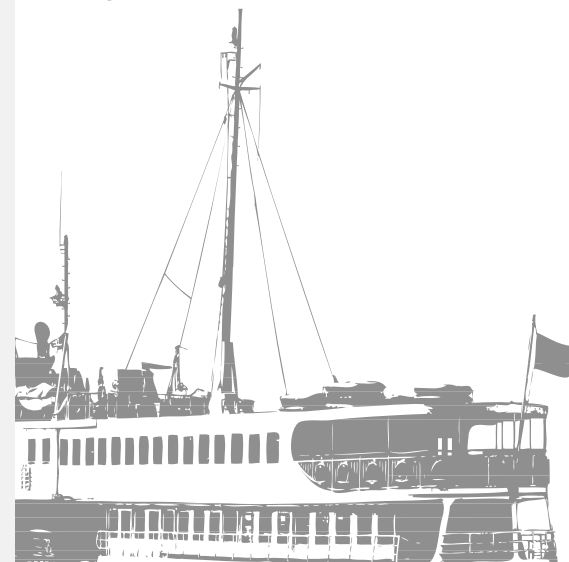
- The Flatbush Avenue corridor is currently used by a number of utilities including for electrical, gas, cable and telephone lines and pipelines. Current and any future arrangements should be structured so as to enhance, and not detract from, the experiences of park visitors and wildlife, and should directly benefit the park itself.
- In order to meet the needs of current and new users of the site, allow the construction of a booster chlorination system at the site to provide safe drinking water.



*(Upper Photo) Bus service could be increased through pilot programs & marketing.*

*(Middle Photo) Completion of key connections and internal bike trails would increase the attractiveness of the Jamaica Bay Greenway.*

*(Lower photo) A ferry landing could be added to the Gateway Marina. There is great interest within New York City for creating a ferry loop that links attractions throughout the Harbor.*



Transportation to and from Floyd Bennett Field is perhaps the park's greatest challenge.



## ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Floyd Bennett Field provides both significant ecological values and vast areas of open space with distant horizons and scenic waterfront vistas. At community meetings the public has repeatedly noted that this openness is perhaps the greatest value of the site. These remaining ecological assets should be fully protected and restored.

Led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Harbor Estuary Program and the Hudson River Foundation, a more recent effort to restore a great number of sites all around the New York / New Jersey Harbor known as the Comprehensive Restoration Plan<sup>8</sup> has conceptualized a series of Targeted Ecosystem Characteristics.<sup>9</sup> The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey can contribute as the local partner in the implementation of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan.

I. **Remove parts of the concrete pad(s), or cover them with sand or dirt surrounded by a canal, creating a colonial seabird colony or other new habitats.**

- Selectively remove runways or other concrete areas not required for access or recreation, enhancing the continuity of the grassland area, and focusing circulation around Hangar Row and the perimeter of the site.

- A section of concrete pad should be maintained near Hanger B to allow fishing access and water access for passive boating activities (kayaks, canoes, sailing), additionally providing access to a nearby camping facility.

II. **Remove hard-edge bulkheads and surficial remnants of landfill elements throughout the site,**

**remove abandoned buildings that do not have significant historic value, and rebuild the shorelines for both habitat and human use.**

- To improve waterfront restoration and visitor access, as well as implement an important adaptive strategy to address climate change and rising sea level, shorelines should be rebuilt and restored.

- Some beach areas should be designed and managed for horseshoe crab, piping plover and least tern nesting sites, while others should be managed for human access, education, and recreation.

- The Army Corps currently has access to clean New York Harbor sand that might be used to restore disappearing marsh islands, colonial seabird islands, eroded shorelines or bury portions of cement pads or runways.

III. **New York City Audubon and the National Park Service have supported the preservation of the grasslands among the runways, an ecotype characteristic of the Hempstead Plains, which were once part of the largest prairie in the east, covering over 60,000 acres from the Queens border to Plainview, NY.<sup>10</sup> This should be continued, and the grassland maintained and expanded.**

- Enhance the central part of Floyd Bennett Field's open fields by preserving several minimum critical areas of grassland, defined as >100 acres. The area should be managed for the native dominated warm season grassland typical of the Hempstead Plains.



Floyd Bennett Field provides both significant ecological values and vast areas of open space with distant horizons and scenic waterfront vistas.



(continued)

- No fences, structures, or sign-posts should be allowed, precluding natural grassland species' predators.

IV. **Outside of the grassland area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Comprehensive Restoration Plan should be the guiding document for any restoration efforts, although this will require resolving potential conflicts among equally valuable Targeted Ecosystem Characteristics.**

- Implement the Dead Horse Bay Restoration Project as identified in the Army Corps Jamaica Bay Feasibility Study. The project is largely designed. Federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Appropriations and a "local match" are required to move this forward. This project was reviewed by an external scientific panel and authorized by Congress this year.

- With Dead Horse Bay restoration, the natural areas on the west side of Flatbush Avenue will attract new visitors. Pull-outs and viewing areas should be added to Flatbush Avenue with accompanying boardwalks and exhibit components.

IS...



COULD BE...



*Already an identified location for planned restoration efforts, with its vast open space, key wildlife habitat, and miles of waterfront, Floyd Bennett Field could be restored as an urban ecological paradise.*





## EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION

Education and interpretation are at the heart of the national park experience. Floyd Bennett Field should be a unique environmental and historical learning destination for New York City's over one million schoolchildren, the region's 21 million residents, and visitors from around the world.

We recommend that education and interpretation programs transform Floyd Bennett Field into a hub of outdoor educational opportunities for the tri-state region.

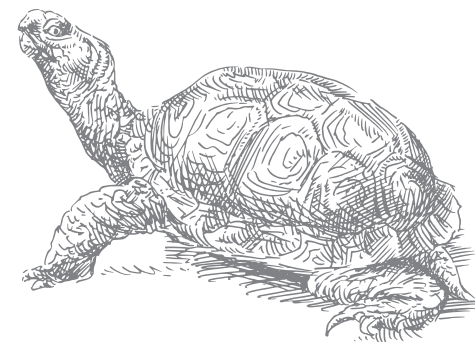
**I. Establish a permanent year-round educational facility at Floyd Bennett Field for diverse users including schools, nonprofits, and individual park visitors.**

- Education and interpretation are not land intensive, but for successful partnership and dynamic programs to thrive, there must be a space for visiting students and scholars to use. A multi-use, year-round facility would provide space for school field trip programming, place-based learning opportunities, problem-based experiences, internships, park research, and teacher training. It could host or house visiting students, scholars, and professors from local colleges and universities, New York City's Department of Education, or programs of nonprofits or private schools that abound in the region.
- This educational facility must include parking and easy access for school buses, meeting rooms, classrooms, lab space, rooms for collections and research, locker-rooms and bathrooms.

**II. Modeled after Lowell National Historic Site's successful partnerships, develop strategic programming partnerships with governmental and nonprofit organizations.**

- Partnerships between local universities, NPS, and the NYC Department of Education could transform Floyd Bennett Field into the most cost-effective environmental education site in the world. Examples of successful education partnerships include: the community engagement program at Lowell National Historic Site; the Hunter College internship program for DEC; the City College Environmental Engineering program with DEC; the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation partnership with the US Forest Service Northern Research Station; and the Public Service Scholarships at Hunter.
- Partnerships should be need- and resource-based. Nonprofit and civic partners should be able to exchange maintenance and capital investments for educational use of facilities.
- Pursue formal research-based partnerships with local universities, such as those highly successful long-term ecological monitoring and urban environmental science research collaborations through the City of New York's Department of Parks & Recreation.

*Possible Nonprofit Partners: Christodora, Fresh Air Fund, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Boy and Girl Scouts of America, New York Restoration Project, Outward Bound.*



Floyd Bennett Field offers space for school field trip programming, place-based learning opportunities, problem-based experiences, internships, park research, and teacher training.

## NEW PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Partnerships are critical to managing and maximizing the use of urban parks. Floyd Bennett Field requires a new sustainable management structure that will be supported by continued federal funding, new support from New York City, on-site revenue, and philanthropy. The National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy and other nonprofits can, and should, continue to play an important role in this effort, but public funds will also be needed to support capital and operating expenses.

A new management partnership could include a broad spectrum of formal arrangements. New management can bring additional resources, a new level of energy and outlook, and the vision that will attract additional philanthropic and organizational partnerships. Potential new partners include regional authorities, academic institutes, and nonprofits. A new management partnership structure must:

- Ensure the site's use and programming is aligned with the Gateway GMP and NPS mission.
- Be approved by Congress in form and/or intent.
- Bring financial structure of the site under a new legal framework (leases, partnerships, trust, etc.).
- Maintain the current level of financial contribution by NPS.
- Add operations and capital support from NYC.
- Ensure all revenue from concessions and other arrangements remains within the park.
- Focus initially on improvements to Floyd Bennett Field, but be capable of expansion to Riis Beach, Fort Tilden, and possibly Canarsie Pier and Fountain and Pennsylvania Avenue Landfills.

The following are three options for a new management structure and legal means of working with new partnerships, not necessarily mutually exclusive nor exclusive of other potential arrangements:

### I. A Park Trust

Modeled after the Brooklyn Bridge Park, Governors Island, or Presidio Trust, Congress would approve the creation of a third party entity supported by both the National Park Service and the City of New York to formally manage and program the park.

- The third party would operate under a new legal structure to lease sites and facilities in the park, and activate them with new programs and services.
- This entity would have jurisdiction over Floyd Bennett Field, and perhaps subsequently expand to other parts of Gateway.
- Both NPS and the City of New York would provide on-going operational and capital support, at levels determined in the planning phase. Subject to Congressional appropriations, NPS financial support for Floyd Bennett Field and all of Gateway would at a minimum be based on, and locked to, a percentage reflecting current support.
- The City of New York's Departments of Parks & Recreation, Environmental Protection, and Education should all be deeply involved in the programming and use of the park.

### II. Intra-Governmental Lease

An intra-governmental agreement between NPS and the City of New York that would allow site- or program-specific partnerships throughout the park.



A new management structure can bring additional resources, a new level of energy and outlook, and the vision that will attract additional philanthropic and organizational partnerships.



(continued)

- A leased arrangement would allow New York City or a separate entity to legally control and manage Floyd Bennett Field. Alternatively, the lease might cover specific sections of the site that are linked to recreation, education, and concessions, while NPS retained control over natural areas and cultural resources. Such a lease structure must allow greater flexibility to attract and manage outside partners.
- The lease might be overseen by a Commission with some authority, similar to the legal structure at Lowell NHS in Massachusetts.

### III. Individual Partnerships

In this option, the NPS would aggressively pursue strategic partnerships with various organizations to build and manage a number of facilities at Floyd Bennett Field. The City of New York could potentially help find partners. Opportunities include a partnership with New York City Department of Education for an educational facility, with the Department of Parks & Recreation for collaborations in recreation and outreach, and with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for restoration.

- Partnerships would continue to be created around specific facilities (i.e. an educational campus) or covering delineated areas (i.e. Aviator Sports). Partners would manage the sites covered by their agreements.
- Given that this option would not change how commercial arrangements and partnerships are managed, and that the site would be managed on a piecemeal basis, this is not a preferred option.

## Possible Partners

- City of New York
- Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Corporations
- Nonprofits
- Local educational institutions



## Partnership Models

- **Central Park Conservancy** – a private nonprofit corporation contracted by the City to maintain and run the park. Funding is contributed by the City and by private donors. The City retains final control over the park.
- **Hudson River Park Trust** – a public agency created to allow the State and City to jointly develop and manage the park. Funding is provided by the City and State and privately generated revenue.
- **Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation** – a nonprofit entity created by the City to plan and develop the park. Capital funding for the project was provided by New York City; the park is required to become financially self-sufficient from onsite revenue generation.
- **Boston Harbor Islands Partnership** – this unit of the National Park System coordinates management of the islands within the Park, which are owned by multiple groups, governmental and non-profits. Some funding is provided by revenue generated in the park, captured by the nonprofit partner group.
- **Presidio Trust** – created by a special act of Congress creating an independent entity to manage redevelopment of a National Park Service site. Federal funding was initially provided for the redevelopment of the site, but it is mandated to become financially self-sufficient relying on revenue from uses within the park as well as private philanthropy.
- **The Prospect Park Alliance and the Open Space Alliance of North Brooklyn** are both nonprofit corporations that have formal operating partnership agreements with NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. The Executive Directors are also the chief administrators of the park(s), ensuring that both the City and the local community have a voice in the management.



In the heart of an urban complex... it will bring the national park program closer to the people than ever before.



## NEXT STEPS

### Senator Schumer and Congressman Weiner,

We ask that you build on the emerging consensus and demonstrate your political leadership by moving forward on the recommendations of this Panel.

We believe the actions outlined here will result in new and more vigorous management of Floyd Bennett Field, will bring about a design for a park befitting the second century of our National Park System, and will ensure that the site becomes an iconic urban national park benefiting the people of New York as well as visitors from across the country.

We therefore ask that you work with your Congressional colleagues, the National Park Service, the City of New York, and other partners to undertake or encourage these specific actions.

#### MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

- Ask the National Park Service to incorporate the recommendations of this report into the General Management Plan now being prepared for Gateway.
- Meet with the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and the City of New York to encourage their adoption of a new management structure for Floyd Bennett Field and possibly Riis Beach and Fort Tilden.
- Help mediate discussions of such a partnership, particularly concerning each entities' potential legal, financial, and programmatic contributions.
- Prepare and pass Congressional Authorization or other legislation needed for the new structure's establishment and oversight.

#### PARK DESIGN

- Direct the new entity – or the partnership that precedes it – to solicit a new externally prepared, inspiring design for the Floyd Bennett Field area. This might be through an open or invited competition. We imagine a process similar to recent efforts at St. Louis' Gateway Arch, the Flight 93 Memorial, Governors Island, and Fresh Kills.
- Work with the management entity, National Park Service and the City of New York to ensure the entire design process is open and transparent.

#### FUNDING

- Dependent upon agreements around the new management structure, seek National Park Service Construction funds, additional Congressional appropriations, and City of New York capital funds to implement critical and fundamental capital improvements such as:
  - » Building rehabilitation and removals
  - » Concrete pad removals, waterfront softening, and other enhancements
  - » Transportation improvements
  - » And more, dependent upon site design
- Support the new management entity and its philanthropic partners as they seek additional private funds for major capital and programmatic improvements such as visitor centers, educational facilities, and other enhancements.



National parks are America's most precious treasures and Gateway National Recreation Area is New York City's crown jewel.

*Senator Charles Schumer*

#### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

While these steps are underway, there are some immediate actions that can also be taken by your offices to compel short-term and tangible improvements to Floyd Bennett Field:

- Press the Administration to provide funding for the Army Corps of Engineers/National Park Service/City of New York partnership to restore Dead Horse Bay;
- Encourage the National Park Service to expand public activities at Floyd Bennett Field to build a constituency, including:
  - » Host more concerts and festivals, related to the park's values, in cooperation with Aviator Sports and other partners;
  - » Highlight aviation history at Floyd Bennett Field; encourage partnerships that will rehabilitate the remaining historic hangars and populate them with HARP and the model airplane club;
  - » Create a concession or work with a nonprofit or other NGO to support greatly expanded non-motorized and passive water use (canoes, kayaks, etc.) on the eastern shore;
  - » Expand and make more publicly accessible Camp Tamarack to create additional outdoor camping and recreation opportunities, especially those tied to passive watercraft use;
  - » Complete the Ryan Visitor Center and transform it into a new entry point for Floyd Bennett Field filled with modern exhibits and interpretation;
- » Enhance ferry service to Floyd Bennett Field by creating a dock for excursion boats and ferry service at the Gateway Marina.
- Encourage the City of New York to partner with the National Park Service and:
  - » Assume a leadership role in the site's new management structure;
  - » Begin to minimize the footprint of City agencies on the site, in particular, phasing out the Department of Sanitation and the New York Police Department driver training activities, while minimizing the impact of NYPD Aviation;
  - » Complete the Jamaica Bay Greenway;
  - » Establish the Department of Education as a lead in a partnership to create a new environmentally-focused educational facility at Floyd Bennett Field, collaborating with other academic institutions to facilitate a high level of programming;
  - » Make significant streetscape improvements to Flatbush Avenue.
- Ask the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to work with the National Park Service and NYC & Company to create a marketing campaign and pilot bus programs down Flatbush Avenue.

NOW IS THE TIME.

# APPENDICES A & B

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
THE OPPORTUNITY  
GATEWAY'S TIME IS NOW  
PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS  
NEXT STEPS  
APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### FLOYD BENNETT FIELD BLUE RIBBON PANEL PROCESS

In April 2010, Senator Charles Schumer and Representative Anthony Weiner convened the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel. Our charge from Senator Schumer and Congressman Wiener was to help the National Park Service, Congress, and agencies involved with the park:

- Establish a shared vision for the future of Floyd Bennett Field and its environs;
- Identify recreational, ecological, and educational opportunities for the area;
- Provide specific guidance to the National Park Service as to how the vision and opportunities can be articulated in the upcoming General Management Plan (GMP) as well as early actions that should be taken to implement the GMP's finding; and
- Work together to implement needed improvements to make Floyd Bennett Field a signature element of Gateway National Recreation Area and the National Park System.

The Panel met four times between April 2010 and March 2011 and additionally held Listening Sessions in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan to solicit input on the needs and potential uses of the site. All meeting and listening session participants expressed the desire to see the site become an exceptional resource for the region and an iconic urban national park, and provided important insight into how to achieve this reality.

- Concessionaires, July 14th, 2010: Companies and organizations that lease or operate concessions or other businesses at Floyd Bennett Field, such as Aviator Sports, the marina, the golf course, and the riding academy.
- Infrastructure Interests, September 17th, 2010: Agencies, authorities, utilities, and other organizations involved in the region's infrastructure that lies

under, or near, Floyd Bennett Field, such as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, NYC Police Department, Department of Sanitation, National Grid, Con Edison, and Time Warner Cable.

- Ecology & Restoration Interests, November 5th, 2010: Agencies, authorities, and other organizations that are involved in the region's environmental restoration efforts, such as the Army Corps of Engineers, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, EPA's Hudson Estuary Program, and New York City Audubon, among others.
- Educational Institutions, September 28th, 2010: Academic institutions, universities, teachers, and educational professionals that have been historically involved in the site's use as an educational resource and/or have a future interest, such as CUNY's Brooklyn College, NYC Department of Education, and a variety of individuals and nonprofit organizations.
- Public Meetings, September 21st and 27th, 2010: The Borough Presidents of Brooklyn and Queens each hosted community meetings to which the local elected officials, Community Boards, local and regional civic organizations and nonprofit groups, user groups, and the public were invited. Nearly 200 people attended the two public meetings.
- Website, December - January, 2011: The Panel posted our draft recommendations on our website in December 2011 and received more than 80 additional comments from a variety of interested people.

## APPENDIX B

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Report is the result of an enormous collaborative effort on the part of government agencies, civic organizations, academic experts, community groups, consultants,

representatives of the private sector, elected officials and hundreds of park lovers. Although it is impossible to acknowledge each individually, we do wish to thank all who contributed their ideas, their time, their expertise, and above all, their passion for Gateway National Recreation Area, and in particular those listed below.

The Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel thanks the organizations and individuals who helped during the Panel meetings and report production process:

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AECOM  
American Littoral Society  
AREAC  
Birding Dude  
Boy Scouts of America  
Borough of Brooklyn  
Borough of Queens  
Brooklyn Bird Club  
Brooklyn College, CUNY  
Brooklyn Community Board #13  
Brooklyn Community Board #14  
Brooklyn Community Board #15  
Brooklyn Community Board #18  
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative  
Brooklyn Velo Force  
Century Road Club Association  
Citywide Disaster Services  
Con Edison  
Deep Creek Yacht Club  
Ecowatcher  
Floyd Bennett Field Gardener's Association  
Fordam University  
Friends of Gateway  
Gateway Bike and Boathouse  
Gateway Marina  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
Global Golf Services  
Gruge Cake  
Harvard University  
Historic Aircraft Restoration Project  
Jamaica Bay Riding Academy  
Kingsboro Community College  
Kissena Cycling Club  
Linnean Society  
Madison Marine Homecrest Civic Association  
Manhattan Beach Community Group  
Marine Park Community Association  
McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance  
National Grid  
National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy  
Natural Resource Protective Association  
New York / New Jersey Trails Conference  
New York City College of Technology

New York Restoration Project  
New Yorkers for Parks  
NYC Audubon  
NYC Department of City Planning  
NYC Department of Education  
NYC Department of Environmental Protection  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
NYC Department of Sanitation  
NYC Department of Transportation  
NYC Economic Development Corporation  
NYC Mayor's Office of Sustainability  
NYC Police Department  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
NYS Department of Transportation  
Pennsylvania Avenue Remote Control Society  
Point Breeze Association  
The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
Rare Bird Alert  
Rockaway Music & Arts  
Rockaway Point Yacht Club  
Rockaway Waterfront Alliance  
Sebago Canoe Club  
South Canarsie Civic Association  
Swim Bike & Run Shops  
Team TAM Bicycle Club  
The Gateway Marina  
The Jamaica Bay Riding Academy  
The Wave  
Tonio Burgos and Associates  
Trust for Public Land  
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Verizon  
Wild Metro  
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## APPENDICES C & D

### APPENDIX C

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### APPENDIX D

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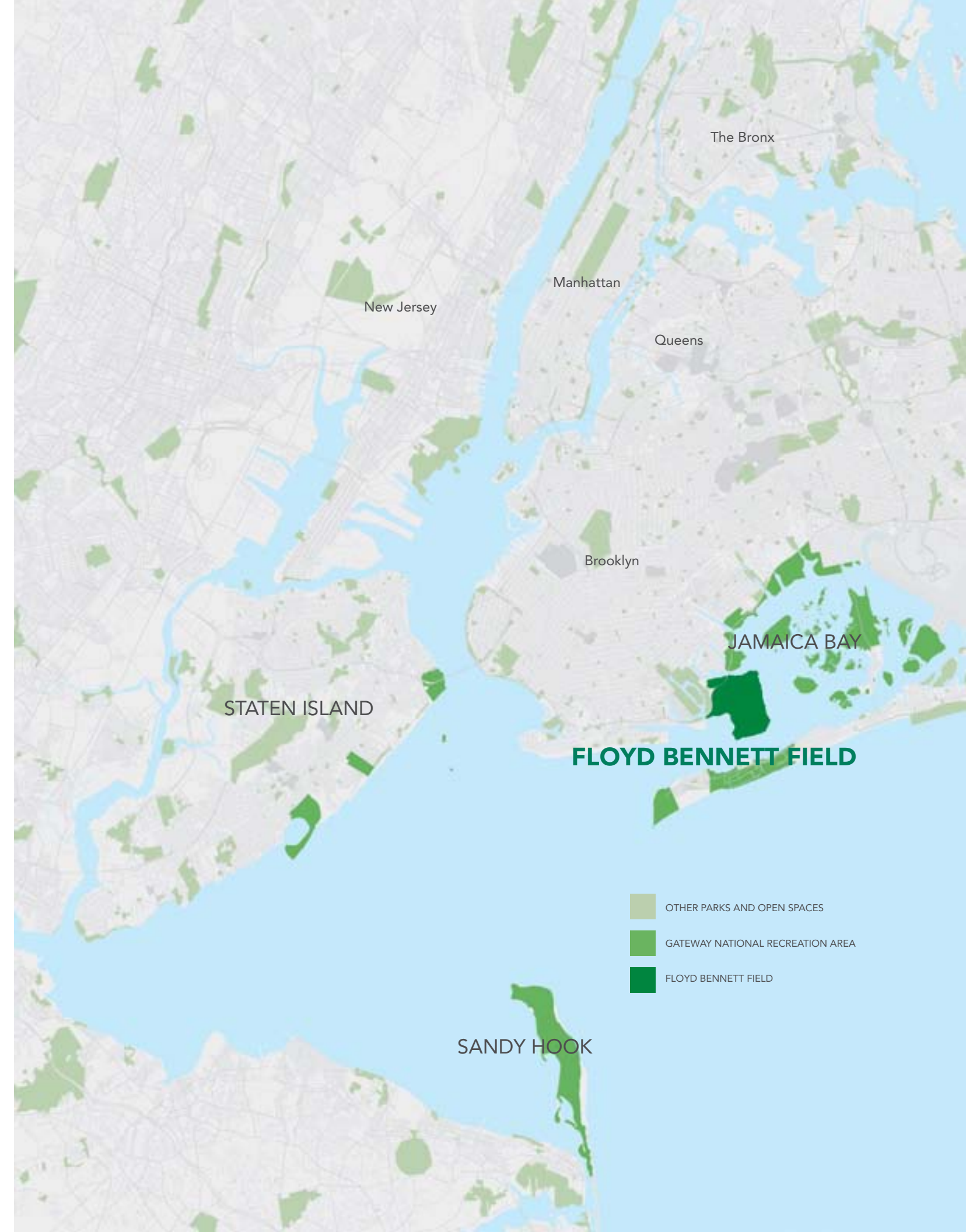
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A REPORT BY THE FLOYD BENNETT FIELD BLUE RIBBON PANEL



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