28 Acres: Recycling the Sheridan

The campaign to remove Robert Moses’ ill-planned and underutilized Sheridan Expressway, and redevelop its 28-acre footprint as a model sustainable community, took a major step forward this year. For the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance (a coalition of community and environmental justice groups), the Pratt Center facilitated a series of five community planning meetings in which community members created a concrete vision for how the land now occupied by the 1.25-mile highway could be transformed. Community residents, young people and leaders from local businesses and community organizations studied the site and the community’s needs. They then crafted guiding principles for redevelopment and created a mixed-use site plan that includes medium-to-high density mixed-income housing, commercial and retail space, and community and open space.

Gut Rehab: NYS Housing Policy Report

In July, we released Time for a Gut Rehab: How the Next Governor Can Rebuild New York State’s Affordable Housing Legacy. The report documented the dramatic need for affordable housing all around the state. It reviewed the legacy of the Pataki Administration and called for significant improvements by the next governor. The report explored what other states have done, and made a series of recommendations for what the next governor can do to strengthen rent regulations that preserve affordable housing, utilize innovative land use and planning strategies to create new affordable units, and overall invest in providing quality housing for all New Yorkers. The report received statewide press attention and helped to inject affordable housing into the gubernatorial debate. In November, Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer appointed Pratt Center Director Brad Lander to his housing policy transition committee to help address some of the issues covered in the report.
Queens for Affordable Housing
Queens has become the city’s most diverse borough – and one facing severe housing challenges. The Pratt Center has helped to convene and support Queens for Affordable Housing (QFAH), a coalition of immigrant and community organizations including Asian Americans for Equality, Forest Hills Community House, Centro Hispano “Cuzcatlan”, Queens Congregations United for Action, and others. In September, QFAH co-sponsored a well-attended Affordable Housing Summit with the Queens Borough President, NYC Housing Preservation and Development and the NYC Department of City Planning. For the first time, inclusionary zoning was applied in Queens along Queens Boulevard in Woodside, and several affordable housing plans were announced. QFAH allies are now working for more and deeper affordability in Queens West, Jamaica, Corona and around the borough.

Gratz Greenroof
We completed installation of a green roof on the 11,000 square foot rooftop of Gratz Industries in Long Island City, Queens. The green roof - the first on an manufacturing building in New York City - will serve as a model for sustainable manufacturing. Our partners in this project include owner and urban journalist Robert Brandes Gratz, landscape design firm Balmori Associates and Earth Pledge. Installation was completed this fall, with planting to take place in spring of 2007.

Note about website:
Please visit our website, www.prattcenter.net, to find more detailed descriptions of all of the projects featured.
Transportation Equity
Our work on greenways in low-income/mixed-use neighborhoods, and on the Sheridan Expressway and Cross Harbor Tunnel campaigns has led the Pratt Center to explore ways that transportation investments can strengthen low-income communities. Launched in October, this work will examine ways that New York’s transportation systems can help create a city that offers opportunity and a high quality of life to all of its residents. During the next two years, Pratt Center staff will work with community and civic organizations to analyze our transportation systems from an equity perspective, and develop proposals and strategies for maximizing their benefits to all New Yorkers.

West Harlem
We are providing planning assistance to a coalition of grassroots organizations and the local community board as they prepare to review and negotiate with Columbia University over their proposed expansion in Manhattanville. Since early 2003, the Pratt Center has been working closely with Community Board 9 to craft a comprehensive community plan to guide the future development of West Harlem. Since Columbia University announced its Manhattanville Campus development plan, we have been working with the community to address differences between the community’s goals and the university’s plan. The work is focused upon ensuring that future development addresses the needs of the community, not only the university. A community newspaper – written in Spanish and English – was published to help residents understand and evaluate the two plans. The official land use review process is expected in early 2007.

Workforce Development Linkages Report
In December, we published Building in Good Jobs, a national scan of best practices in linking economic development projects to concrete workforce development gains for local, low-income residents. Practices featured include living wage requirements, targeted and sectoral training, and first source hiring.

Based on this research, we issued a series of recommendations for municipalities around the country on how they can improve their “linkage” efforts to make sure that development projects generate good jobs, at living wages, for a well-prepared workforce.
Projects

Fulton Street Mall
In February 2006, with Minerva Partners, we released Fulton Street Mall: New Strategies for Preservation and Planning. Our team, led by Vicki Weiner, combined creative approaches to historic preservation, planning, ethnography, surveys and focus groups. The proposed strategies build on the Mall’s underappreciated strengths – it is highly valued by the hundreds of thousands who shop there – to create a vibrant and diverse future. Through thoughtful combinations of old and new, the Mall can continue to serve current shoppers, workers, and owners while becoming an even stronger site of commerce and community.

421-a Reform
We are playing a leading role in reform of the City’s "421-a" property tax program. The 421-a program currently provides a $400 million annual giveaway, overwhelmingly for market-rate housing development. In April, we published a report with Habitat for Humanity NYC that highlighted some of the most egregious examples and drew attention to the need for reform.

Mayor Bloomberg appointed a task force to review the program. The task force recommended some changes, but not a citywide or comprehensive reform. The Pratt Center joined with allies – including Housing Here and Now, ACORN, Queens Congregations United for Action and SEIU 32BJ – to push for comprehensive reform that will create more affordable housing, offer good jobs and save taxpayer dollars.
Redefining Economic Development

With our partners at New York Jobs with Justice and the Brennan Center for Justice, we convened a spring/summer series on "Redefining Economic Development in NYC."

Six in-depth issue education sessions focused on good jobs, workforce development, affordable housing, clean and green infrastructure, financial services and public processes that shape development. The sessions served as a space for networking, and issue and strategy education. The goal is to develop both a broader blueprint and a stronger network of community, labor and advocacy organizations working to make economic development in New York City more equitable and accountable.

Neighborhood Economic Development in Bedford-Stuyvesant

In April, longtime Pratt Center Associate Director Rudy Bryant shared the stage with Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff and Bed-Stuy Restoration Corporation Director Colvin Grannum (a member of the Pratt Center’s Advisory Board), at the launch of the City’s new “Comprehensive Neighborhood Economic Development” (CNED) program in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

Through the CNED initiative, the City and community groups working together will develop, prioritize and implement new programs that address community needs in the areas of workforce development, financial literacy/asset building and small business support. The Pratt Center conducted research and outreach to help community groups participate fully as partners with the City in this initiative.
Mission
The Pratt Center works for a more just, equitable and sustainable city for all New Yorkers, by empowering low-income communities to plan for and realize their futures.

Background
For over 40 years, we have helped community-based organizations in their efforts to address the root causes of poverty and inequality, advance sustainable development and improve neighborhood quality of life.

Today, the low-and moderate-income communities we work with are grappling with new challenges. While real estate value in New York City has dramatically increased, and housing and commercial development are booming, millions of low-income New Yorkers continue to struggle to make ends meet and have seen far too little benefit from the city's robust economy.

The traditional tools of community economic development — such as rehabilitating buildings into affordable housing and revitalizing neighborhood retail strips — are essential, but in our "hot market" economy, they alone are not sufficient to address the needs of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.

We believe community groups need new tools to leverage development into good jobs and affordable housing without sacrificing livable neighborhoods. And they need the public places (schools, parks, community centers, child care) that make communities thrive. With this in mind, we focus our work in three initiatives:

Planning for Equitable Development
To ensure that development brings meaningful benefits to low-income New Yorkers and sustains livable communities rather than undermining the fabric of neighborhoods.

Promoting Environmental Justice and Sustainability
To build sustainable communities and push the New York City region toward environmental sustainability and equity.

Helping Communities Build
To help community organizations develop places that address unmet public need, like child care centers, schools, libraries and open space.
Reply Card

Yes, I am pleased to support the Pratt Center and join with you as you work with communities to ensure that there are true opportunities for all New Yorkers to share in the benefits of the city's prosperity.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift in the amount of:

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- 500
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Name ____________________________

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Please add me to your list of e-subscribers to receive on-going news about the Pratt Center. My email address is ____________________________

Detach the response card along the perforated fold and use the pre-paid envelope provided to return the card along with your check payable to Pratt Institute. Your gift is tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

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