

## APA New York Metro Chapter - 2012 Meritorious Achievement Award

Our next award is to recognize work of unusual achievement in the field of Planning.

Newtown Creek was once the country's most heavily industrialized waterway, providing a prime location between Brooklyn and Queens for industries such as oil refining, copper smelting, power plants, and wastewater treatment. Decades of industrial waste and careless handling of toxic products have left a legacy of contaminated soils and polluted water. While the large scale industrial uses have mostly left, Newtown Creek continues to be a valuable urban industrial asset. As New York City's largest Significant Maritime and Industrial Area (SMIA), the Creek is a vast area of working industry at the center of a thriving urban megaregion. Given the importance of urban manufacturing and warehousing in providing jobs with higher wages and better benefits and providing a stable base for city neighborhoods, there is a need to put the many vacant and underused brownfield sites in the Newtown Creek BOA back into productive use and add quality industrial jobs to the area's economy.

Moreover, since the EPA placed the Creek on its National Priorities List in 2010, there has been a renewed interest in cleaning and greening the waterway and the land around it. To facilitate these ends, a unique partnership of three nonprofit groups with vested interests in Newtown Creek formed to develop a comprehensive planning framework for the area. This partnership, between the Greenpoint Manufacturing & Design Center, Riverkeeper, and Newtown Creek Alliance, represents a departure from traditional top-down brownfields planning in that the three groups are non-governmental advocacy groups for industrial development, environmental protection, and neighborhood quality of life, respectively. The partnership successfully applied for and received a grant from the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program.

While many BOA studies have been undertaken in the New York metropolitan region, none have been on the scale of Newtown Creek, with its 865 acres, over 300 individual properties, and complex transportation and maritime infrastructure.

An extensive and engaging public involvement process involved not only large format public meetings for area residents and other parties, but also a 'business breakfast' that invited business owners to discuss their needs, individual interviews with business and property owners to help assess industrial

market conditions, and direction from a large steering committee made of stakeholders from the City, State, business advocacy groups, residential groups, and others. The result was a ~~comprehensive~~ <sup>wide</sup> plan for revitalization that outlines an integrated framework of strategies and recommendations to transform Newtown Creek into an environmentally sustainable and economically viable 21st Century maritime industrial community – one that will foster new industrial uses and generate ~~high~~ <sup>high</sup> paying jobs within reach of economically depressed residential communities in the city, while, at the same time improving the environment and access to hidden open space resources.

The Newtown Creek project has set a new bar for BOA grant projects as well as for industrial Brownfields planning in New York by creating a highly comprehensive and overarching review of this enormous and complicated area while, at the same time, performing a detailed level of analysis and crafting practical implementation recommendations for specific parcels. We are pleased to recognize the Newtown Creek Brownfield Opportunity Area Step 2 Nomination Report as this year's winner of the Meritorious Achievement Award. Brian Coleman, Chief Executive Officer of GMDC will be accepting the award on behalf of the distinguished project team.