

Red Hook Island

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In researching how to protect Red Hook, Brooklyn from hurricane storm surge, we re-discovered an island underwater in New York Harbor. It was a project begun and abandoned in the 1920's. I'm a resident of Red Hook, active in planning my community – I'm also the **former Chief Urban Designer of New York City** and Founding **President of the Moynihan Station Development Corporation**, so I have deep experience in getting public private projects started in NYC.

Finding this island – and the legislation that created it – could be the largest housing and economic development opportunity for New York this century. And if correctly engineered, it could protect SW Brooklyn from hurricanes and sea level rise. And if correctly financed, it would pay for itself.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governor Al Smith signed a law May 1, 1923 authorizing the creation of Red Hook Island on 275 acres of land under the waters of upper New York Harbor. (Laws of New York, 1923, Chapter 322, p553-554)

Red Hook Island was originally intended as a breakwater island protecting the docks of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, doubling the number of piers, and increasing warehousing capacity by 16 million square feet.

Federal appropriations were used to begin dredging and shaping the island underwater to within 10' of the surface.

Red Hook Island would have made Brooklyn the epicenter of New York Harbor as the greatest harbor in the world.

The project was abandoned after the creation of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey when port expansion shifted to New Jersey.

The law creating Red Hook Island is still on the books and provides a legal pathway to its completion and its use "for any purpose permitted by the Charter of New York City."

MORE BROOKLYN

If we complete the Red Hook Island that Al Smith started, and map a waterfront park and a grid of Brooklyn city blocks onto it, we can solve 21st Century problems:

- ROOM FOR GROWTH OF NYC: **32,340,000 square feet** of new mixed use development on 275 acres of new land.
- HOUSINGS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: **Housing for 46,000 people; 59,000 commercial jobs, 10,700 manufacturing and maritime jobs**
- CLIMATE RESILIENCE & SEA LEVEL RISE: a breakwater island 20' above sea level protecting SW Brooklyn from Bay Ridge to Carrol Gardens.
- INFRASTRUCTURE: Beneficial Use Dredging: A cost-effective place to put all the spoils from digging NY's necessary new infrastructure tunnels and connecting the island with a subway extension.

NEXT STEPS

To complete the job we started in 1923, we have to combine politics, finance and design. **Battery Park City** is a model.

Politics:

1. Create momentum through political leadership. This has been a community-driven plan; the Governor's interest gives it standing to create a public-private partnership.
1. Horizontal Development: BUPS can generate revenue by accepting Beneficial Use Dredge (BUD) material to create the island. Under the BUD program administered by the US Army Corps of Engineers, fill from NYC's tunnel projects can be used to build up Red Hook Island
2. Vertical Development: When the land is created, a state authority like the Battery Park City Authority can use Public-Private Partnerships to develop the buildings and infrastructure into a long term value generator with PILOTS and private development. **The land value created is approximately \$3.98 billion** on 32,340,000 buildable square feet of residential, commercial and manufacturing development.

Design:

1. Red Hook Island must be designed for Beneficial Use Dredging. The harbor edge of the island should be a large waterfront park which increases habitat diversity in Upper New York Harbor.
2. RHI must protect SW Brooklyn from hurricane storm surge. Building to an average of 20' NAVD requires **16.6 million cubic yards of fill**.
3. In the long run, RHI must protect SW Brooklyn from sea level rise. The two flood gates connecting the island to Red Hook and Owls point can be converted to locks to maintain two different water levels (like locks on the Erie Canal.)
4. RHI must provide room for housing and jobs. Mapping Brooklyn blocks onto the island with mixed use zoning at an average lot density of 4.4 FAR creates 32,340,000 square feet of development: room for 46,000 people to live, 59,000 commercial jobs, and 10,700 maritime and manufacturing jobs.
5. RHI must be connected to the city. The extension of either the 1 train, E train, or the 2nd Avenue subway to the island is feasible.
6. Red Hook Island is "more Brooklyn" than Battery Park City. Red Hook Island is larger but less dense. Both BPC and RHI include beautiful public waterfront parks.

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COMPARISON OF RED HOOK ISLAND AND BATTERY PARK CITY

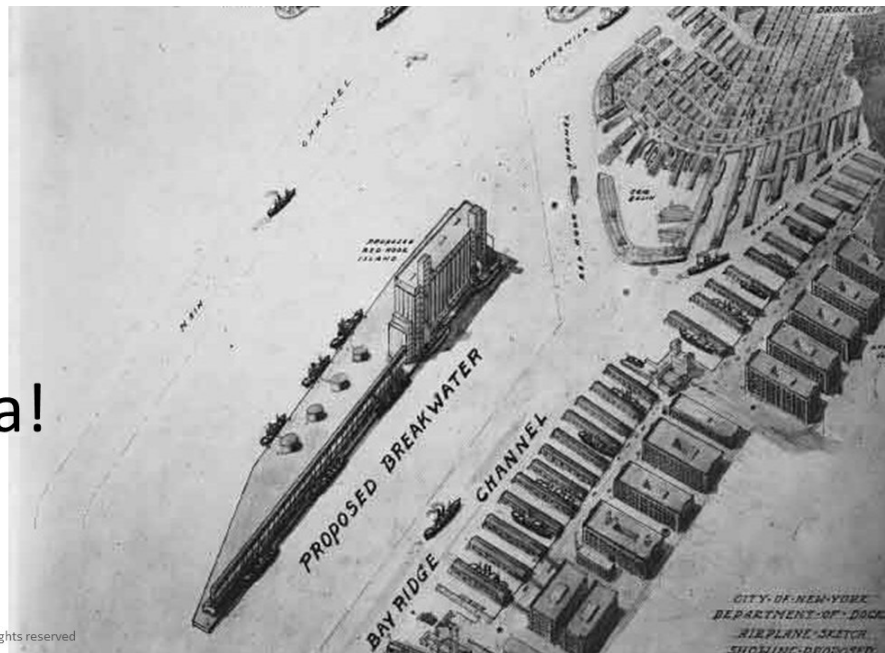
RED HOOK ISLAND	BATTERY PARK CITY
LAND AREA: 275 ACRES	LAND AREA: 92 ACRES
COMMERCIAL: 11.9 MILLION SF	COMMERCIAL: 9.3 MILLION SF
RESIDENTIAL: 16.8 MILLION SF	RESIDENTIAL 7.1 MILLION SF
MANUFACTURE/MARITIME: 3.5 MILLION SF	

IMAGES OF RED HOOK ISLAND

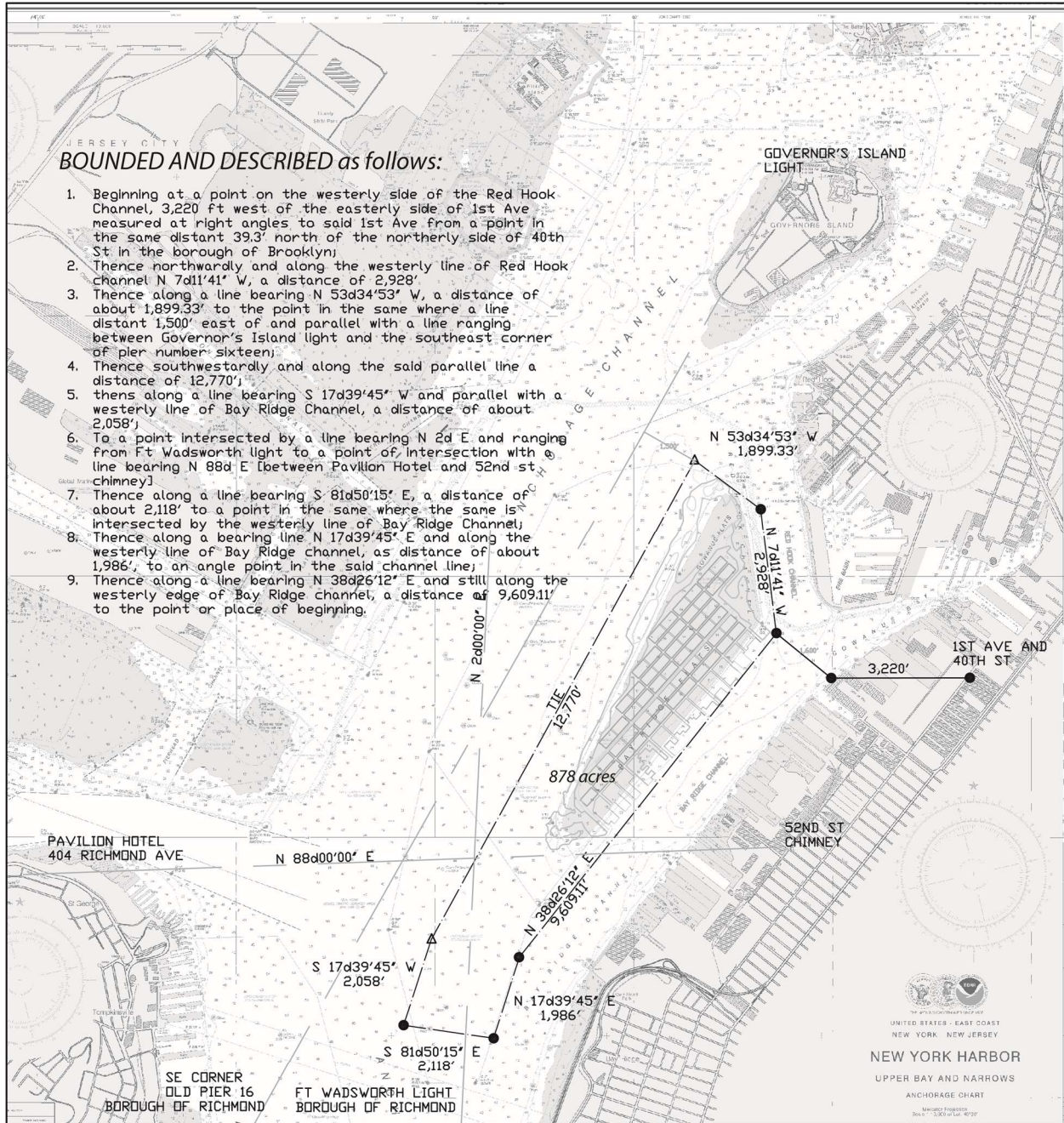
From a satellite view, it is invisible. The underwater bathymetry shows the island and then how city blocks can be mapped onto the island. The image at bottom shows an image from 1923.



Eureka!

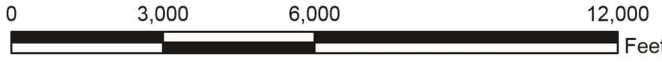


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BOUNDED AND DESCRIBED as follows:

1. Beginning at a point on the westerly side of the Red Hook Channel, 3,220 Ft west of the easterly side of 1st Ave measured at right angles to said 1st Ave from a point in the same distant 39.3' north of the northerly side of 40th St in the borough of Brooklyn;
2. Thence northwardly and along the westerly line of Red Hook channel N 7d11'41" W, a distance of 2,928'
3. Thence along a line bearing N 53d34'53" W, a distance of about 1,899.33' to the point in the same where a line distant 1,500' east of and parallel with a line ranging between Governor's Island light and the southeast corner of pier number sixteen;
4. Thence southwardly and along the said parallel line a distance of 12,770'
5. thens along a line bearing S 17d39'45" W and parallel with a westerly line of Bay Ridge Channel, a distance of about 2,058'
6. To a point intersected by a line bearing N 2d E and ranging from Ft Wadsworth light to a point of intersection with a line bearing N 88d E [between Pavilion Hotel and 52nd st chimney]
7. Thence along a line bearing S 81d50'15" E, a distance of about 2,118' to a point in the same where the same is intersected by the westerly line of Bay Ridge Channel;
8. Thence along a bearing line N 17d39'45" E and along the westerly line of Bay Ridge channel, as distance of about 1,986', to an angle point in the said channel line;
9. Thence along a line bearing N 38d26'12" E and still along the westerly edge of Bay Ridge channel, a distance of 9,609.11' to the point or place of beginning.



RED HOOK ISLAND

AN ACT to authorize the commisioners of the land office to grant and convey to the city of New York certain land under the waters of upper New York bay.

-NY State Law Ch. 332, May 1, 1923