WHAT IF THERE WERE A LOWER WEST SIDE?

Tribeca, Hudson Square, the West Village, the Meatpacking District, and Chelsea are all thriving hubs of creative capital. Greenwich Street could make them all part of a new “Lower West Side,” anchored by Greenwich South and the Battery.

Opening a new channel that links Manhattan’s newest and most anticipated public space to its oldest one becomes a pivotal opportunity for all of Downtown.

Just as Broadway is the grand, celebrated central spine of Manhattan, Greenwich Street could become a new kind of connector, an intimate corridor linking Battery Park to the World Trade Center Memorial to the High Line and solidifying the bonds among the neighborhoods in between.

Since 1966, when construction of the World Trade Center erased five blocks of Greenwich Street, Greenwich South has been cut off from its northern neighbors. Reconnecting Greenwich Street, once one of Manhattan’s major north-south thoroughfares, could create the spine of a new, united “Lower West Side.”

Five Principles for Greenwich South

- Encourage an Intense Mix of Uses
- Reconnect Greenwich Street
- Connect East and West
- Build for Density, Design for People
- Create a Reason to Come and a Reason to Stay

potential actions:

- DESIGN new signage and wayfinding
- GREEN Greenwich Street
- BUILD a surface transit link on Greenwich Street

for example:

- Greenwich Street as the spine of the Lower West Side
CONNECT DESTINATIONS

• Limited east-west connections
CONNECT DESTINATIONS

- Limited east-west connections
- Limited north-south connections
CONNECT DESTINATIONS

• Greenwich Street connects Battery Park with the World Trade Center site

• Pedestrian walkways along Washington Street and across bridge over West Street

• New streets at Edgar Street and Morris Street
Greenwich South’s next phase of development could make the streetscape as dazzling as the skyline.

Cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong and London have demonstrated that densely populated, mixed-use districts are inherently sustainable, exciting to inhabit and manageable. Lower Manhattan is just such a district. Greenwich South is underbuilt and primed to be the site of Lower Manhattan’s next growth spurt. Design that includes active building bases open to the public could improve the pedestrian experience and announce a new model for the mixed-use tower.

By opening up architecture to the street and vice-versa, next-generation towers in Greenwich South could set a new global standard for a robust and active street life.

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Potential actions:

- Leverage development rights over the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel site
- Use zoning to address a multi-layered, active streetscape

For example:

IwamotoScott Architecture’s idea for a mixed-use tower that splits at the bottom to create a new passage from east to west, and twists at the top to align with the Manhattan street grid.
WHAT IF WE DIDN’T TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED?

As architect Thom Mayne said, “if you don’t like the infrastructure, change it.”

The history of Greenwich South is one of promise and ambition repeatedly obscured by out-sized, ill-placed infrastructure. A thriving “Millionaire’s Row” in the early 1800s, Greenwich South was blighted by the dirt, noise and shadow that came with the imposition of the elevated railway in 1868. The area didn’t recover until the 1920s, as the back office hub for Wall Street. This progress was again thwarted by the construction of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel in 1947 and the World Trade Center superblock in 1966. Each added to the isolation and devaluation of Greenwich South, deterring the area’s growth and prosperity.

Now is the time to break this cycle. The El came down, so why can’t we cover over the six-acre gash the Tunnel approach cuts through Greenwich South? Repairing this scar would reunite these 41 acres with the rest of Lower Manhattan. With a fresh outlook, Greenwich South can be the final piece of the puzzle, the lynchpin of an exciting, sustainable and successful Downtown.

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potential actions:

EXTEND and reinforce Battery Park northward using pocket parks, public open space, bike lanes, etc.

for example:

Morphosis’ idea for “Battery North,” a reinvention of the southern tip of Manhattan with residential, commercial and public spaces.
Create a Reason to Come and a Reason to Stay

Create icons that establish a new identity and sense of place for Greenwich South.

Urban touchstones, like the steps of the Metropolitan Museum, Isamu Noguchi’s Red Cube at Liberty Street, or Union Square Park, define an image for an entire district. These icons create tangible incentives to visit the site. They can serve as a rendezvous destination, a location for public events or a lunch spot for workers, but they also become conceptual anchors that sustain neighborhood property values and enhance desirability. Creating large and small icons in Greenwich South would help provide both identity and gathering places within the district. New retail, cultural, dining and entertainment activities in the site can rely on these iconic destinations to attract activity, make wayfinding easier and support a 24-hour district.

Opportunities

- RENOVATE Edgar Plaza and commission an art installation to create an icon and place for gathering
- EXPAND Downtown Alliance Re:Construction program to sites in Greenwich South
- COMMISSION temporary art installations over the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel approach and on the ventilation facility
- HOST a rotating architectural design competition at the Edgar Plaza or Greenwich Gateway site akin to the Serpentine Gallery in London or PS1 in Queens
- BUILD a tall iconic structure that is not a building—like the St. Louis Arch—to enable a new perspective on Lower Manhattan and to establish a new datum for Greenwich South
- BUILD a new public space for the long-term future of Lower Manhattan
- LOCATE a weekend greenmarket site in Greenwich South
Great public spaces act like magnets, attracting people, activity and attention. The most successful come to define their neighborhoods.

Since 1950, the entrance to the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel has dominated the area now called Greenwich South. This massive piece of city-scale infrastructure obstructs the connections between the Financial District, Battery Park, Battery Park City and the World Trade Center. Yet the tunnel site is at the junction of these places, and thus has the potential to be a lynchpin for Lower Manhattan, drawing many different kinds of people—workers, residents and visitors—together.

Whether it happens in five or fifty years, redeveloping the site above the tunnel entrance could provide Greenwich South with just the kind of iconic, place-making public space that could define the neighborhood for generations to come.

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**Potential Actions:**

- DECK over the tunnel approach to build:
  - an extension of battery park
  - a market park and public plaza
  - an urban beach
  - sports fields

**For example:**

Architecture Research Office’s concept for a public market hall, park, plaza and recycling center over the Tunnel approach
WHAT IF A TUNNEL FULL OF CARS HELPED CLEAN THE AIR?

Environmental and economic sustainability are inseparable. In other words, fresh air, environmentally-conscious infrastructure, green buildings and planted streets are very good for business.

As an extremely compact urban community with untapped development capacity, Greenwich South is well-suited for comprehensive, integrated, multi-scaled plans for district-wide sustainability. Employing a broad spectrum of tactics can convert Greenwich South into a model of urban sustainability.

Concepts implementable in the short term include bicycle-friendly streets, tree plantings, green roofs and rainwater harvesting. Long-term strategies might incorporate permeable paving, biogas capture, compost collection and a visionary “green sponge” to clean the air. Ultimately Greenwich South can provide a new model for infrastructure as a functional amenity.

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potential actions:

- INSTALL bike racks and plant trees
- PILOT an eco-tech project to filter the air
- BUILD a green roof
- DEVELOP a district-wide energy conservation system

for example:

Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis Architects and Transsolar Climate Engineering’s idea for a vertical park that double-functions to filter air pollutants from car exhaust