

Waterfront pathway edges closer to reality

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Most people who stood at the Greenpoint waterfront where India St. dead-ends at a chain-link fence would see only trash, broken glass and rotting wooden piers.

Not a group of avid cyclists and walkers from Brooklyn. Instead, they see a vibrant pathway teeming with kids on bikes and families out for a stroll. At least they hope to, one day soon.

"It's really beautiful, even in this decrepit state," said Brian McCormick, co-founder of the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative. "The waterfront has been largely invisible, even to people who live a block away."

Since 1998, the group has been waging an uphill battle to realize its vision of a protected bike and pedestrian path stretching along the Brooklyn waterfront from the Newtown Creek in Greenpoint to the existing path along the Shore Parkway in Bay Ridge.

Now, after years of hard work, the ambitious plan is finally gathering momentum. This summer, the group got a \$75,000 planning grant to draw up preliminary designs for the project.

"It's definitely a watershed," said Milton Puryear, the group's co-chairman. "The biggest issue before was most people couldn't imagine it happening."

As a starting point, the city has begun to solicit bids for a path between Hamilton and Atlantic Aves. in south Brooklyn.

Plans for the ambitious Brooklyn Bridge Park include a waterfront pathway. Mayor Bloomberg's plan to rezone and redevelop the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront also includes such path



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Brian McCormick (l.), co-founder of Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, with board members Meg Fellerath and Milton Puryear.

Williamsburg waterfront also includes such path.

To ride the route of the proposed path shows a glimmer of what it could be. On a hidden stretch of waterfront near N. Seventh St. in Williamsburg, friends enjoyed the late-afternoon sun. The cobblestoned streets in Vinegar Hill provided a tranquil break from the city.

Though the path is still years away, the cyclists remain hopeful that one day their dream will become a reality.

Once the first section or two gets built, the group says, it's just a matter of time before people across Brooklyn begin to share its vision.

"You just have to give people something to start with," said cyclist Meg Fellerath.

Originally published on October 29, 2004

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