



ONLINE-OFFSHORE: News from Governors Island Regional Plan Association / Governors Island Alliance

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Editor: Richard E. Mooney

NOTE TO READERS:

This is a periodic newsletter by and for people who care about metropolitan New York and its “new” special space. The Governors Island Alliance is an association of more than 30 local, regional and national organizations dedicated to planning, conservation, historic

preservation and the environment. To be deleted from the e-mailing list, to submit letters for publication, or for questions, go to governorsisland@rpa.org.

Headnote: In the copy that follows, GIPEC is the Governors Island Preservation and Education Commission, the joint state and city agency that owns most of the Island. Their website is www.gipec.org. NPS refers to the National Park Service, which owns 22 acres that constitute the Governors Island National Monument (Fort Jay, Castle Williams and land between). Their website is: www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org. GIA is us.

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LOOKING AHEAD: LONG-TERM

GIPEC is looking for “bold ideas” to develop Governors Island as a world-class destination. A formal Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) was issued on March 30. While May 16 is cited as the deadline for proposals, it is likely to be extended to June 20th. Interested parties – such as developers, investors, non-profits and schools and colleges – are invited to submit ideas for anything from a single building, a piece of land, or the whole Island.

The Governors Island Alliance welcomed GIPEC’s move. “This is a very important and exciting step forward,” said Kenneth Fisher, GIA chairman. “We look forward to equally exciting responses. Governors Island will be New York’s next great place.”

Secretary of State Randy A. Daniels, put a nice stamp on it in an interview with the Wall Street Journal: “It is the last great open space. We have to give New York an Island that 50 or 100 years from now people will look back... the same way they look back on Central Park today. It has to be a place where a person can not only go and stay in a five-star facility, but also where a single mom and her two kids can hop on the ferry to play in the park and buy a hot dog.” Robert Pirani, executive director of the Alliance, pointed out that “private sector creativity and investment are essential if the Island and its historic buildings are to be successfully restored.” But he cautioned that “proposals for private uses must be evaluated in the context of an overall plan for establishing the Island and the National Monument as a great civic and educational space, as promised by Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg in accepting title to the island.” For open-

ers, \$20 million is needed to prepare the island for parkland and new construction, half-and-half from the state and the city, on top of funds they have already committed for repairs to the Island’s historic buildings and for current maintenance and operations. In addition, \$4 million in federal transportation aid is needed to support the ferry.

The deed to the Island includes specific commitments by the governor and the mayor to set aside at least 40 acres for a public park and 20 acres for educational uses, and to create a continuous waterfront esplanade around the 2-mile perimeter. It also includes permanent design restrictions within the 92-acre historic district at the north end of the Island.

GIPEC announced that after reviewing the ideas it receives, and meeting with respondents whose ideas seem most appropriate and promising, it will issue Requests for Proposals (RFP’s) for specific development work late this year, and will designate development teams shortly thereafter. The detailed RFEI is available by contacting GIPEC at 212-440-2202 or through the GIPEC website, which also has information about conferring before making a submission, taking a tour of the Island, and registration: www.govisland.com/rfei.asp.

LOOKING AHEAD: SHORT-TERM

Last summer the Island had almost 17,000 visitors, a four-fold increase over its first public season in 2003. This year there will be more, some thousands of day trippers and other thousands drawn by special events – movies, concerts and other organized functions. The Alliance has offered some suggestions to make it easier to stage events on the Island, and thus get more people out there to experience that special space.

For its part, the Alliance is tentatively contemplating a day-long “Governors Island Day” on Saturday, September 17. Preliminary planning includes music, theater and dance performances, boating, a running race on shore and the Mayor’s Cup Schooner Race offshore, exhibits, lectures, food and “the world’s largest picnic table.” It is all quite tentative at this point, but the aim is to make this the “first annual” of an annual celebration.

DESIGNS BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A recent issue of the National Monument newsletter lays out three draft designs for the future of the Monument – small, medium and large. Formally titled “Preliminary Management Alternatives,” the first would emphasize history and preservation of the 22-acre Monument and its two forts; the second would work with other cultural and arts organizations to offer venues within the Monument’s 22 acres for art shows, performances, educational conferences and the like, and would post historical information about the Island at a half-dozen spots outside the Monument grounds; the third plan would develop the Monument as a sort of “Harbor Center” in partnership with educational, environmental and maritime organizations, so visitors could learn about the natural environment and conservation of the Island and the harbor.

Read all about it at www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org and tell them what you think. Their final plan is due next year. In the meantime the NPS is proceeding along several lines. Among them: developing visitor programs and rehabbing the forts and the “glacis” – a fancy French word (pronounced glah-cess) for the expanse of grass and trees formerly a small golf course for the military personnel stationed on the Island.

THE ISLAND IN PICTURES

GIPEC has published a stunning new paperback book of photos that serves as visible proof of the setting and the views that make Governors Island so special. The book

– GOVERNORS ISLAND: Photographs by Lisa Kereszi and Andrew Moore – is \$15.95 at the Urban Center bookshop on the ground floor of the Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave. (in the north wing of the old Villard mansion directly behind St. Patrick's Cathedral). The Target Company sponsored an exhibit of enlarged reproductions at the Urban Center last year.

MAILBOX

From: Judith Berdy

President The Roosevelt Island Historical Society

It is great to read about your successful summer. I know how challenging

all these activities are to do! As we say on Roosevelt Island.... mazel tov!

From: Rebecca Winters

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My father established the Ordinance School on Governor's Island in the late 70's. We were stationed there from 1974 thru 1983. He may be able to provide some insight if a museum of wartime history is ever established or background info is needed for the ordinance on the Island.