

# Online - Offshore

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## News and Stories from Governors Island

Regional Plan Association /  
Governors Island Alliance

[www.governorsislandalliance.com](http://www.governorsislandalliance.com)

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### Park Design Competition Launched

Five multi-national teams have been selected by GIPEC (Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation) to submit designs for the Island's park and public spaces. Their proposals will be made public in June at a series of exhibits and forums. The winning team and their design approach will then be selected in July by a panel of experts, not yet identified, with the Team being put under contract to plan the park shortly thereafter.

The framework of the assignment to the five teams is described by the Request for Proposals (RFP) that GIPEC published on March 7. It is almost 50 pages of welcome detail and graphics that guide each team as they prepare their designs. The Alliance will be submitting comments in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, you can read the RFP here: [http://www.govisland.com/About\\_GIPEC/park\\_design\\_rfp.asp](http://www.govisland.com/About_GIPEC/park_design_rfp.asp)

GIPEC President Leslie Koch announced the teams to an audience of more than 150 at the January 17 Design Forum – co-sponsored by the Alliance – at the AIA Center for Architecture in Greenwich Village. The five are:

- Field Operations/ WilkinsonEyre Architects, of New York and London.
- Hargreaves Associates/Michael Maltzan Architecture, Inc., of New York and Los Angeles.
- Ramus Ella Architects (REX)/ Michel Desvigne Paysagistes (MDP), of New York and Paris.
- West 8 urban design & landscape architecture b.v./ Rogers Marvel Architects / Diller Scofidio + Renfro, of Rotterdam and New York.
- WRT LLC/ Weiss/Manfredi / Urban Strategies, Inc., of Philadelphia, New York, and Toronto.

They were chosen from among 29 teams that responded to GIPEC's Request for Statements of Qualification (RFQ's) last October. The



**Previous work by Design Competition teams** Clockwise, above: Hargreaves Associates, Crissy Field, SF; Field Operations, Fresh Kills, SI; West8, Parque Lineal del Manzanares, Madrid; Below: WRT, New Stapleton Waterfront, SI; Bottom: Ramus Ella (REX), Dallas Center for the Performing Arts.



request went out to firms that practice landscape architecture, planning, architecture, art and engineering.

Linda Neal, Superintendent of the Governors Island National Monument, opened the forum with a discussion of the National Park Service's General Management Plan for the Monument's 22 acres. The plan favors a concept that focuses on larger harbor history, ecology and waterfront revitalization efforts. It includes construction of a new dock and visitor center at Buttermill Channel and improvements to the two forts and pathways around them.

Following GIPEC's announcement of the design teams, GIA Executive Director Rob Pirani highlighted the key elements for a successful park, as featured in guidelines issued by the GIA last June – which can be found at:

<http://www.governorsislandalliance.org/pdf/giparkguidelinesm.pdf>.

The guidelines emphasize a large contiguous park in the southern end of the Island oriented on the harbor, a connection to the Island's history, an overall park-like character for the Island, and the importance of phasing in early improvements.

The panel of professionals at the forum, moderated by Robert Yaro, president of the Regional Plan Association, addressed the question: What will bring the public to the park? Urban designer Jane Thompson of the Thompson Design Group stressed the importance of having a park that is unimpeded by development, a place where people can go to escape the built environment. Planner-architect Mark Strauss from FXFOWLE speculated on whether the park space on the Island would be enough of a magnet to the public. Laurie Olin of Olin Partnership focused on the fact that Governors Island is the "true center" of New York City, and that a park on the Island should be a park for the entire city.

The panel was followed by questions from the audience. A person who had grown up on the Island asked that planners strive to reveal the wonderful scale and historic character of the Island.

**Island Quickfact:** The Island was first named Pagganack ("Nut Island") by the Lenape Indians because of the bountiful trees found on the Island. After the Dutch purchased the Island in 1637, the name was changed to Noyten or Nutten Island for the same reason.

## Ferry links

Governors Island is hardly an island unto itself. Its relationship to the nearby attractions of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island will strongly affect the Island's future. The current bidding competition for the Liberty Island Ferry Service contract is pivotal. For the past 18 years, Circle Line has held the exclusive contract to transport visitors from Battery Park to Liberty and Ellis Islands. The concession is one of the most lucrative National Park Service (NPS) agreements in the country – possibly the most – generating some \$35 million in annual revenues from about 4 million riders.

The prospect of a new contract has raised hopes that ferry service may soon be more frequent and, most important for Governors Island and its National Monument, that it may tie into or subsidize much-needed service to surrounding harbor attractions.

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA), the Governors Island Alliance, and others have pushed the Park Service to include provisions for possible service to the Island in the upcoming contract. MWA aims to develop an extensive network connecting various points in the city with parks and recreation sites in Jamaica Bay, Staten Island and New Jersey. It argues that such a network would expand tourism and recreational activity throughout the harbor, benefiting the economy and the quality of life in the city and the region at large.

Unfortunately the terms for bidding on the new contract only allow for, but do not require, ferry service to other NPS sites (such as Governors Island's historic forts). Despite a requirement that the winning bidder purchase Circle Line's boats for \$18 million, the bid has attracted the interest of more than a dozen local and national ferry companies. The deadline to submit offers is April 27. For now, it remains unclear if the new Liberty Island Ferry Service contract will be a missed opportunity or if it will offer benefits to the harbor as a whole.

## The Harbor School Has Landed!

Governors Island acquired its first tenant when GIPEC approved the New York Harbor School's application for an Island site. A project of the Urban Assembly, the school is one of the small, specialty high schools – there are 149 of them – promoted by the city to re-engage young people in their education.

The school is currently located in Bushwick in central Brooklyn, about as far away from the water as any location in New York City. Locating it on the Island puts it in the center of lower New York Harbor and helps to fulfill the "E" in GIPEC (Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation).

The Harbor School's mission combines a hands-on harbor experience with the rigor of a creative curriculum. Planning to open on the Island next year, the school will benefit the general public as well as its 400 students. The boat building program, among others, will be open to the entire community on the days when Governors Island is open, allowing the public in general to enjoy the maritime educational experience.

### Want to volunteer on Governors Island this summer?

GIPEC is seeking volunteers in the following areas:

- **Ambassadors** will help direct visitors to the island, provide information about daily activities, help with events and tours.
- **Beautification Volunteers** will help with planting, clean-up, tree tagging, and other beautification activities.
- **Other opportunities** may take advantage of your special skills in graphic arts, archaeology, and more...

Go to [http://www.govisland.com/PDFs/volunteer\\_app.pdf](http://www.govisland.com/PDFs/volunteer_app.pdf) to download a Volunteer Application Form and let us know how you would like to get involved!

**Governors Island in Winter, as seen from Battery Park.**

