

Contact: Jeremy Soffin, RPA, 212/253-2727, ext. 303



## **Public Urged to Vote on Visions for Governors Island Park Space**

*Governors Island Alliance Issues Guidelines for  
Public Spaces on Governors Island, Identifies “Unsuitable” Designs*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 11, 2006

NEW YORK – The Governors Island Alliance today released an illustrated set of guidelines for parks and public spaces on the 172 acre Island. The guidelines propose specific design objectives and standards to ensure that the more than 80 acres of public spaces to be created on the Island match the special character of the Island and are truly public in nature. These public spaces will include at least 40 acres of new public parks, a 22 acre National Monument, a waterfront esplanade, and the existing historic landscapes. The guidelines include three illustrated alternative visions for the Island’s future that the public can vote on at [www.governorsislandalliance.org](http://www.governorsislandalliance.org). Four potential layouts of the public space are also identified as “unsuitable configurations.”

The guidelines were released as the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) begins its consideration of the 25 respondents to its Request for Proposals. The Alliance called on GIPEC to use these guidelines to begin developing a detailed plan for the Island parks and public spaces now, so that a draft is in place before a developer or team of developers is chosen this fall. A group of finalists is expected to be chosen later this summer.

“In the absence of a detailed master plan to guide private investment, we believe that early establishment of a framework of parks and public space is essential to protect the Island’s public character,” said Robert Pirani, Executive Director of the Alliance and Director of Environmental Programs at Regional Plan Association. “Creating a blueprint for the large parks, waterfront esplanades, public pathways, and historic campus greens will deliver on the Mayor and Governor’s public promises in accepting the Island and will help spur redevelopment of the rest of the Island.”

The guidelines called for the park and public spaces to include the following:

1. An overall park-like character for the Island.
2. A large, contiguous, important waterfront park in the south devoted to passive and active public use.
3. The glacis/parade grounds developed and programmed immediately as the Island's first major public open space.
4. A continuous waterfront esplanade that offers variety in character and is accommodating of maritime uses and harbor experiences.
5. Circulation on the Island organized around pedestrian-only pathways and punctuated by public plazas and crossroads.
6. Affordable and frequent access to the Island from a variety of locations.
7. Public spaces on the Island that are publicly controlled and managed and are a priority for GIPEC's overall operation of the Island.
8. Sustainable development principles and green technology incorporated into the design, construction, and operations of the landscape and built structures.

The provisions described in the guidelines can be met under a variety of redevelopment programs and overall design. They are sufficiently flexible so as to enable GIPEC and the National Park Service to meet their intent without sacrificing the creativity or flexibility of their forthcoming plans. Because the future development program on the Island is unknown, the Alliance did not make any assumptions as to the use, type, or scale of the existing or new buildings on the Island. Their possible locations are shown in the Guideline diagrams only to distinguish them from recommendations for the parks and public spaces.

Kenneth K Fisher, Chair of the Alliance, explained: "Just like the parks and promenades in Battery Park City, creating a system of open spaces now will increase the value of the Island to prospective developers by providing marketable addresses and quality property frontages. While the private uses may change over time, locking down the public spaces now will guarantee that the Island remains a great public space and a great place for development."

The guidelines were developed by the Alliance with the assistance of a team of urban designers and landscape architects with considerable experience in New York City park and public space design, including Bonnie Harken, AIA, Nautilus International Development Consulting, Inc.; Robert Lane and Robert Freudenberg of Regional Plan Association; Donna Walcavage, Donna Walcavage Landscape Architecture + Urban Design; and Stephen Whitehouse, Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners. These guidelines build on the findings of the Alliance's 2004 Parks Planning Community Workshop. More than 200 citizens worked with professional facilitators to define the uses and activities that befit the Island's unique character and location. The workshop documents are also available on the Alliance web site.

*First convened in 1995 by Regional Plan Association, the Governors Island Alliance is a coalition of civic, environmental, and preservation-focused organizations and individuals working to celebrate the Island's rich history, create memorable parks and public spaces, and ensure appropriate reuse of the Island and its historic structures.*

###