Port Morris Harlem Riverfront

Brownfield Opportunity Area

-

Step 2
NOMINATION REPORT

New York City, Bronx County

Grantor: New York State Department of State (NYS DOS)

Grantee: South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO)

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INTRODUCTION

This Nomination Report, presented by the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO), is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for advancing Brownfield remediation as a means to stimulate community and economic revitalization throughout the proposed Harlem Riverfront BOA study area presented in this report, as well as to complete Step 2 of the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program. The BOA Program is an initiative of the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) that facilitates community-based planning and revitalization of underutilized, potential brownfield-impacted properties in targeted communities. The BOA Program delivers financial assistance and expertise to drive the formation of redevelopment and implementation strategies that transform brownfields from liabilities into community assets that generate businesses, jobs and revenues for local economies, as well as provide new housing and recreational opportunities. Since 2007, NYS DOS has awarded BOA funding of more than $17 million for 74 projects throughout New York State. Collectively, communities are addressing over 50,000 acres impacted by more than 4,700 brownfield sites located in former industrial areas, downtowns, waterfronts, and commercial and residential areas.[1]

The area of the South Bronx being examined by the SoBRO in this report is known as the proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA (i.e., "the study area"). In addition to this Executive Summary, this report has been divided into four sections, as follows: Chapter 1, "Project Description and Boundary;" Chapter 2, "Public Participation Plan and Techniques to Enlist Partners;" Chapter 3, "Analysis of the Proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area;" and finally a comprehensive set of Appendices containing supplemental information. The highlights of Chapters 1 through 3 are presented in this Executive Summary.

When SoBRO originally applied for the BOA Program in 2004, a much larger area of the South Bronx was selected to be included in the application. This original larger area included most of the South Bronx, and was composed of four community board districts (Community Boards 1, 3, 4, and 5). Later, SoBRO scaled back the project area to include only Port Morris, a loosely defined industrial neighborhood comprising the "U-shaped" waterfront perimeter of the southern-most section of the Bronx that lies below the Bruckner Expressway. The Port Morris area was subsequently sub-divided into three distinct zones for individual BOA study and designation. These subzones became known as: The Harlem Riverfront BOA, the Bronx Kills

[1] *Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program Accomplishment Report,* April 2010. New York State Department of State.

BOA, and the East River BOA. The focus of SoBRO's Step 2 Nomination study ultimately narrowed to the first of the subzones, officially titled the "Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA."

This Nomination Report documents the recently completed analysis that was conducted for both the study area and specific "Strategic Sites." This document also provides recommendations on how to implement the area-wide and site-specific strategy for the proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA, which was developed in cooperation and consultation with the local community. SoBRO has prepared this report with the goal of completing the Step 2 process, and advancing to Step 3 of the BOA Program, which will encompass in-depth environmental site assessments and re-use planning for the Strategic Sites identified in this report.

SOBRO - ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATION

SoBRO is uniquely qualified to administer the BOA Program in Port Morris due to its long-standing 36-year history as a local community development organization and agent of community revitalization in the South Bronx. SoBRO has successfully transformed numerous blighted properties into productive use, namely affordable housing, commercial, and community space. Prior to its involvement in the BOA Program, SoBRO became familiar with the environmental cleanup process as a crucial component of responsible development. SoBRO came to realize the prevalence of environmental issues in the South Bronx, the significant role these issues can play in development, as well as the need to emphasize these issues in any community planning and/or development effort. This relevant experience, coupled with SoBRO's established partnerships with key stakeholders (such as elected officials, government agencies, local community groups, residents, and business owners), positioned the organization extremely well as a lead agency for the BOA Program in the Port Morris area, which at its core aims to create and implement community-driven revitalization. Additionally, the general goals of the BOA Program align directly with SoBRO's grand mission to "Build a Better Bronx."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through its public participation initiative, detailed in Chapter 2 of this report, SoBRO has gleaned from the local community that major needs include housing, community space, workforce training and job creation. These needs, which form the backbone of a community-derived vision and broader plan for neighborhood revitalization, guide all of SoBRO's work within the BOA Program. Through its development-based approach to BOA, SoBRO targets under-utilized properties for development that is consistent this vision.

PORT MORRIS HARLEM RIVERFRONT BOA BOUNDARY

The proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA comprises a 168-acre area that has been delineated as the area bounded by East 149th Street to the north, the Harlem River to the south and west, and Lincoln/Morris Avenues to the east, as shown in **Figure S-1**. This boundary generally coincides with the recently adopted Lower Concourse Rezoning area, a re-zoning initiative conducted under the aegis of the Bronx office of the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP). The new mixed-use designation (referred to as "MX") of this area has

Proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA Boundary

Feet
0
1,500

Harlem Riverfront BOA Study Area
Figure S-1

played a significant role in shaping SoBRO's BOA work, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of this report. SoBRO, in cooperation with the DCP, found that the area contains a significant number of vacant or under-utilized lots that hold promise as potential redevelopment sites that can strengthen the area and spur additional investment.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND STRATEGIC SITES

The existing conditions analysis evaluates land use and zoning, the presence of brownfield, abandoned, vacant and underutilized sites, ownership characteristics, parks and open space, significant buildings, cultural resources, major transportation and infrastructure systems and elements, and natural features of the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. The analysis also identifies existing brownfield properties characterized as "high impact" Strategic Sites, and involves preliminary assessment of environmental issues as well as reuse potential should these properties be redeveloped. The analysis is based on visual assessments and a review of information from Geographic Information Systems, aerials, tax maps, topographic maps, agency databases, and past reports completed by SoBRO for the study area, as well as Phase I assessments and the use of a site profile tool developed specifically for evaluation of properties as BOA Strategic Sites.

LAND USE

The proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA is an area composed primarily of industrial land uses interspersed with small pockets of commercial and residential uses, where environmental issues are likely to exist. The area is experiencing an increase in development pressure, which demands that new approaches be examined that promote redevelopment and economic growth that are compatible with the changing area.

The study area is largely composed of underutilized industrial and manufacturing properties. The prevailing industries in the communities of Port Morris and adjacent Mott Haven are wholesale distributors, apparel, food, sheet metal and other manufacturing, waste transfer and recycling, newspaper printing, parcel service distribution, automotive related uses, and intermodal rail yards. Transportation and utility uses are also prevalent in the proposed Harlem Riverfront BOA, including a substantial number of parking facilities.

The study area is also dotted with commercial uses, mainly east of Grand Concourse. There are a few significant public facilities and institutions in the study area, including Lincoln Hospital, Hostos Community College, Deeper Life Bible Church, and the Community School for Social Justice. There are only limited amounts of vacant land, public open space, and residential uses to be found within the proposed Harlem Riverfront BOA.

ZONING

In June of 2009, the New York City Council adopted the Lower Concourse Rezoning, which rezoned the designated area from a manufacturing to a mixed-use district (MX), in order to introduce residential development opportunity and waterfront access. The zoning map and text changes, essential to implementation of the BOA vision, are now in effect. The rezoning affects a 30-block area surrounding the lower end of the Grand Concourse and is generally coterminous with the boundaries of the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA area. As part of the

rezoning plan, the DCP mapped the Special Harlem River Waterfront District and established a Waterfront Access Plan which provides for a publicly accessible, continuous walkway along the waterfront between E 135th and E 149th Streets, as well as a new waterfront park located along the Bronx side of the Harlem River just below the intersection of East 149th Street and Exterior Street. The site, currently a parking area for buses, will when developed, provide excellent waterfront access for the surrounding local community as well create a facility that will complement new riverfront residential uses being planned in the wake of the Lower Concourse re-zoning. The rezoning also made the provisions of Inclusionary Zoning applicable in the area, and approved other related actions to promote new investment opportunities in the underutilized, but transit-rich, Lower Concourse area. These actions combine to transform a waning industrial waterfront area and the lower Grand Concourse into a vibrant, mixed-use and mixed-income community with new housing, waterfront open space, and an array of retail services.[1]

The Lower Concourse Rezoning will effectively preserve a significant portion of the area's manufacturing base and the jobs associated with these businesses, while simultaneously creating new residential, commercial and open space development opportunities that will serve to enhance the surrounding area. SoBRO's involvement in helping to refine this zoning initiative is described in detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

The southern portion of the Harlem Riverfront BOA study area which is *not* within the newly designated Lower Concourse mixed-use district is already zoned MX, allowing for manufacturing, residential, community facility, and/or certain commercial uses.

OTHER

In addition to an analysis of land use and zoning discussed above, information was collected relative to existing community characteristics found within the proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. This information includes: land ownership, building inventory, parks and open space, historic and cultural resources, transportation systems, infrastructure, natural resources and environmental features. This information was collected in order to further contextualize SoBRO's work in the Harlem Riverfront BOA, particularly as it relates to Strategic Sites. This background information and analysis is described in detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

STRATEGIC SITES

Within the context described above, SoBRO views the BOA Program as a resource intended to target troubled, often underutilized sites within the study area, and develops strategies to develop them into viable, tax paying real estate that will spur overall community revitalization. Because redevelopment of these sites is expected to have a high-impact on the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA, they were selected to be BOA Strategic Sites. The BOA Program defines Strategic Sites as brownfield or suspected brownfield properties located within the proposed BOA boundaries, which if cleaned up and redeveloped, could act as catalysts for further revitalization of the area. SoBRO has identified six Strategic Sites within the Harlem Riverfront

[1] NYC DCP website, Lower Concourse Rezoning–Overview, accessed on August 26, 2009 at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/lower_concourse/index.shtml

study area (see **Figure S-2**), and has conducted preliminary environmental and reuse assessment at each of them. Full narratives for each site can be found in Chapter 3. The six sites are:

1. Rider: Former gasoline station at the intersection of Rider Avenue and East 138th Street.
2. Deegan: Former gasoline station at the intersection of Third Avenue and East 135th Street, plus the five adjacent lots (comprising a full city block).
3. 2401 Third: Large waterfront property at the intersection of Third Avenue and East 132nd Street that currently houses a family-owned construction shoring company.
4. 101 Lincoln: Large waterfront property across from #3 on Lincoln Avenue that currently houses a parking lot and several low-rise warehouse buildings.
5. 2568 Park: Former auto- and rail-use facility that is currently vacant.
6. Bronx County Recycling: Waterfront recycling and concrete processing plant at the intersection of Exterior Street and East 149th Street.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

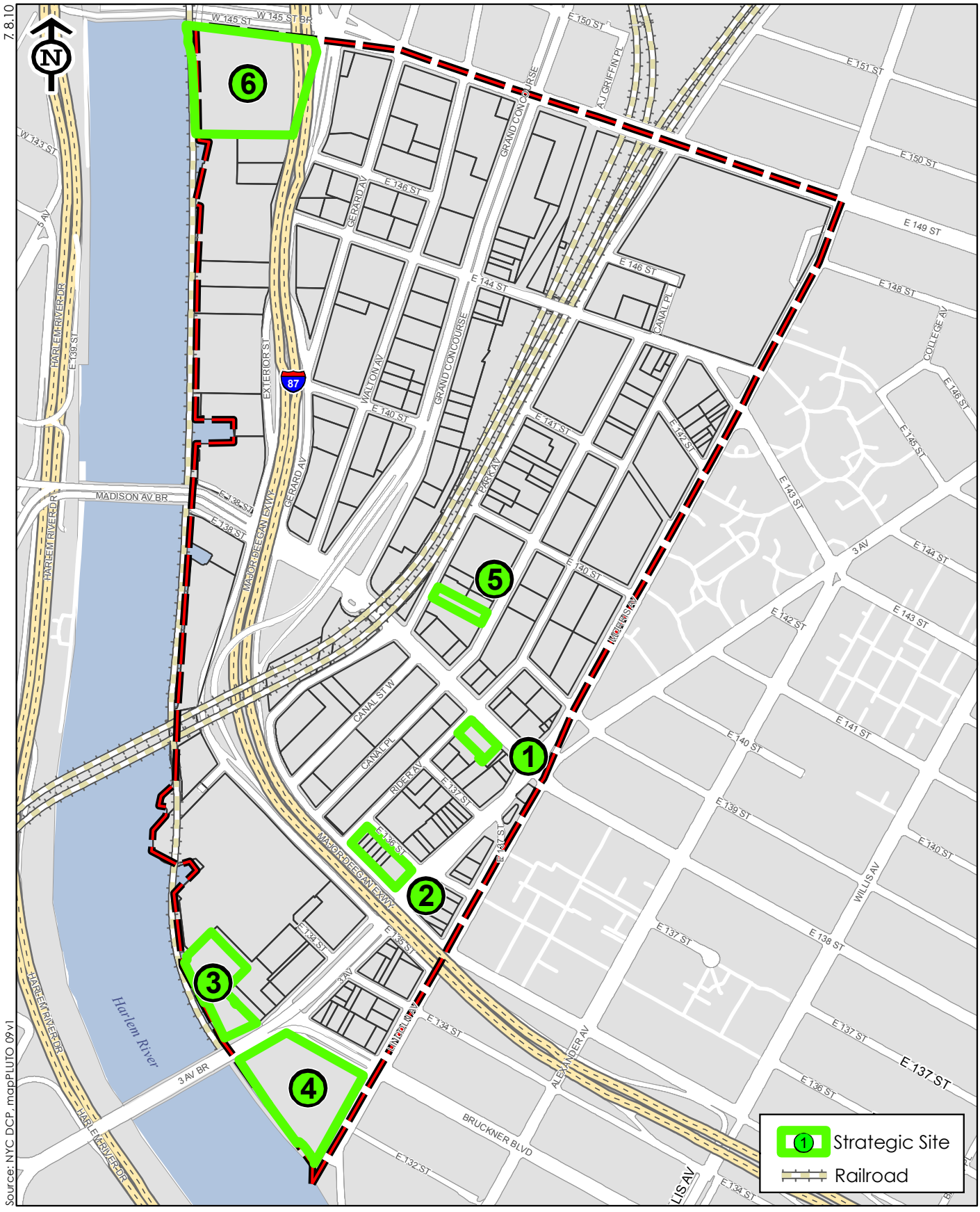
Environmental Constraints

For the past century, the Harlem Riverfront BOA study area has been characterized by industrial and manufacturing businesses. Heavy manufacturers, waste transfer stations, and auto-related businesses have left a mark on the area, and contamination resulting from historical uses can be found on the majority of properties. Data from DEC and other sources indicate that petroleum spills are widespread in the South Bronx. Based on a review of available data, most of the land in the study area—developed or undeveloped—likely has varying degrees of contamination. As a result of this wide-spread potential for contamination, many of the properties within the study area have been given an E-Designation by DCP, which requires that further environmental investigation (and potential mitigation) be undertaken before any redevelopment can occur at a site.

More specifically, the assessment of SoBRO's six Strategic Sites has identified some common characteristics. For each of the Strategic Sites, the potential for sub-surface contamination exists from one or more of the following: past on- and off-site industrial and/or automotive/petroleum-related operations; on-site gasoline tank(s); and/or uncontrolled fill on-site. The discussion of the Strategic Sites exemplifies the environmental issues found in the study area, which upon further analysis could possibly reveal harmful levels of substances such as petroleum, solvents, and metals.

Land Use and Zoning

- The recently adopted Lower Concourse Rezoning (which affected much of the BOA study area) is expected to bring about much needed housing and employment to the area, while simultaneously accommodating existing manufacturing uses in the area. This new zoning



Proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA Boundary

0 Feet 1,000

Strategic Site Locations
Figure S-2

will serve to directly support and encourage redevelopment in the study area, particularly at several of the Strategic Sites, which would not have been possible or likely without the new MX zoning in place.

- The new zoning permits a variety of residential and commercial uses. Densities under the highest allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) could be increased on approximately 150 properties.
- The new zoning is expected to promote a substantial increase in residential use. New residential construction could include a range of both small townhouses and multi-family residential developments.
- The development of new affordable housing should be encouraged in the study area. To encourage the development of affordable housing, inclusionary zoning allowances could be utilized. Under the Inclusionary Zoning program, developers are able to exceed the maximum allowable as-of-right residential FAR if they provide permanent affordable housing as part of their redevelopment program.
- An increase in commercial uses in the study area would bring in a larger variety of activities and attract more spending to the area. New uses could include neighborhood retail stores (e.g. restaurants, delis, beauty salons, or repair services) or larger commercial users such as warehouses, hotels, or entertainment facilities. Grocery stores should be especially encouraged since the study area is currently underserved by such uses. Grocery stores are now allowed as-of-right within the Lower Concourse MX district.
- The portions of the study area most prone to new development are the Harlem River waterfront and the area between 138th Street and the Major Deegan Expressway, due to the desirability and accessibility of these locations coupled with the Lower Concourse up-zoning to allow for residential uses.
- New residential uses in the study area should be located in a manner that limits conflict with industrial uses.

Waterfront and Open Space Development

Opportunities exist for creating attractive new gateways to the Bronx, especially on the Harlem River waterfront parcels that comprise the Special Harlem River Waterfront District mentioned above. Waterfront development would also begin to connect surrounding neighborhoods along the Harlem River. New public waterfront open space should be provided to a community currently underserved by parks and open space resources and historically cut off from the waterfront by industry and infrastructure. The new rezoning encourages waterfront development with required publicly-accessible waterfront open space. As each lot redevelops, new waterfront open space will create a continuous promenade along the Harlem River below E 149th Street, and link with the parks and public open space currently being developed north of E 149th Street, thus increasing connectivity and overall vitality of these communities.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The proposed Harlem Riverfront BOA is advantageously located, with excellent access to the region's transit infrastructure network, which includes various subway and bus routes, as well

as major bridges and highways that connect the area with Manhattan, New Jersey, Westchester County, and other key destinations. Strategic location of the area is anticipated to attract and benefit a larger residential population commuting to employment centers as well as commercial businesses that need to be close to their customer base.

Business and Employment

The distribution within the study area of existing commercial businesses and employment indicates an increasing influx of non-industrial uses (i.e. large share of professional service businesses and employment).

RECOMMENDATIONS: ADVANCING TO STEP 3

It is SoBRO's main goal to advance the proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA to Step 3 of the BOA Program ("Implementation"), to achieve an official BOA designation, and to bring Strategic Sites closer to the point of remediation and redevelopment. SoBRO's next steps will focus on eligible actions under BOA Step 3 for the Strategic Sites identified in this Nomination Report, including: advanced environmental site assessments (Phase II ESAs), development of remedial investigation and remedial action plans, and concrete redevelopment planning activities such as market and feasibility analysis and architectural design. SoBRO has conceptualized a four-step process to advance Strategic Sites through Steps 2 and 3 of the BOA Program, thus mobilizing their transformation into productive reuse:

Activity 1. Identifying and engaging property owners;

Activity 2. Defining brownfield remediation issues at a site;

Activity 3. Identifying financial and related barriers to redevelopment; and

Activity 4. Creating site-specific redevelopment plans.

A more in-depth description of each of the activities in SoBRO's site-specific planning process, highlighting some of the challenges that are inherent in each stage of the process, is provided in Chapter 3 of this report.

As the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA advances from Step 2 to Step 3 of the BOA Program, SoBRO will be able to undertake higher level environmental assessments at certain Strategic Sites. These assessments will give a much clearer picture of the properties' environmental conditions, and thus enable accurate determination of cleanup actions needed, and associated cleanup costs. These components help in calculating overall feasibility of development, and advance the property along the path towards viable reuse.

In Step 3 of the BOA Program, SoBRO will continue to reach out to property owners to educate them about brownfield-related issues and relevant regulatory processes, available solutions and potential development opportunities, and work together with them on subsequent environmental analysis and site development. BOA-supported activities at Strategic Sites headed towards development will include architectural design, site accessibility and transportation analysis, and also market analysis to help determine end use. Other activities under a Step 3 BOA Program in this study area will include ongoing cultivation of strategic partnerships with regulatory agencies, elected officials, and the local community, to ensure

that redevelopment efforts are compatible with community needs in the proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. ✷

Chapter 1: Project Description and Boundary

A. INTRODUCTION

This Nomination Report is intended to fulfill the requirements of the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) with respect to Step 2 of the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program. The area of the South Bronx being examined and proposed for BOA designation by the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO) in this report is known as the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA (i.e., "the Harlem Riverfront BOA" or "the study area"). The extent and character of the Harlem Riverfront BOA study area, as well as an outline of the BOA Program's elements and requirements, are detailed in subsequent sections.

Chapter 1 of this Nomination Report starts with a description of the BOA Program and process, followed by a description of SoBRO as the lead project sponsor, including its role within the community; highlighting its achievements both as a community organization and as a developer. This description is followed by an outline of the goals and vision developed by SoBRO in collaboration with the community for the proposed BOA, including the background and history of the project, and the refinements that have been made to the project limits since SoBRO first began its participation in the BOA Program in this area. The study area for the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA is then described, including a discussion of its delineation.

Chapter 2 describes SoBRO's efforts to reach out to the local community, stakeholders, and government agencies to involve them in the creation of a planning and development vision for the area. The chapter also provides an overview of the techniques used to enlist partners in the BOA process and SoBRO's approach to redeveloping brownfield sites.

Chapter 3 of this Nomination Report provides a thorough inventory and analysis of existing conditions in the study area, including a discussion about land use, abandoned, vacant, or underutilized potential brownfield sites, land ownership, parks and open space, and significant buildings. The discussion in this chapter introduces and describes the "Strategic Sites" within the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA selected for individual study. This chapter of the report also highlights the study area's historic and natural resources, supporting infrastructure and transportation systems and elements, and underlying economic conditions. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations for progressing to Step 3 in the BOA Program. This chapter also presents potential Step 3 challenges associated with brownfield redevelopment in the study area.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA (BOA) PROGRAM

In 2003, New York State created the BOA Program**,** which was "designed to assist communities foster redevelopment, and return dormant and blighted land into productive and catalytic

areas while restoring environmental quality."[1] The program, administered by the NYS DOS, provides funding and resources to organizations involved in the revitalization and redevelopment of communities affected by the presence of brownfield sites. A "brownfield" or "brownfield site" is defined in New York State Environmental Conservation Law Article 27, Title 14, as any real property, the redevelopment or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a contaminant. The BOA Program provides a flexible planning framework for communities to catalyze the redevelopment of multiple brownfields and affected areas through a locally-driven process. The program promotes a strong involvement of the local community and provides assistance to:

- Facilitate the creation of a **community-wide vision** around brownfield issues and brownfield redevelopment planning;
- Establish **sustainable development goals and objectives**;
- Coordinate **and collaborate with government agencies** and **community groups;**
- Initiate **public-private partnerships** essential for successful redevelopment of specific brownfield sites; and
- Analyze site-specific **brownfield issues** and develop **mitigation strategies.**

The BOA Program consists of three major steps:

1) Step 1 - Pre-Nomination Study

   The study includes a preliminary, area-wide analysis of the BOA study area, including: a description and justification of the study area and associated boundaries, current land use and zoning; descriptions of existing brownfield sites and other underutilized properties; and a description of the area's potential for revitalization. In this stage, the applicant engages existing partners and begins to establish a community network to initiate the public participation process.

2) Step 2 - Nomination Study

   The Nomination Study involves detailed analysis of the BOA study area, identification and assessment of individual "BOA Strategic Sites," and diligent community outreach. Area-wide analysis includes existing conditions (assets and challenges, land use, zoning, infrastructure, etc.) and potential for revitalization. Site specific analysis involves general due diligence, Phase I environmental assessment, and possible re-use options of potential brownfield sites that could act as catalysts for revitalization of the area. Step 2 activities are documented in a final Nomination Report, which is meant to function as a new area-wide plan. The report must include key findings and recommendations for revitalizing strategic brownfield sites in concert with the expressed needs and wishes of the local community. (This document is intended to satisfy Step 2 requirements for the subject Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA.)

[1] NYS DOS Division of Coastal Resources: http://www.nyswaterfronts.org/grantopps_BOA.asp, accessed September 22, 2009

3) Step 3 - Implementation Strategy

   The Implementation Strategy describes the techniques and actions necessary to implement the area-wide plan developed in Step 2, and documents compliance with New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) regulations. Implementation activities focus on the individual Strategic Sites, including additional assessments such as Phase IIs, feasibility analysis, design, marketing, and other reuse planning activities that set Strategic Sites on an active path towards environmental cleanup and sustainable redevelopment. Successful completion of this final step of the BOA Program results in NYS DOS officially designating the study area as a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA).

When SoBRO originally applied for the BOA Program in 2004, a much larger area of the South Bronx was selected to be included in the application. This original larger area included most of the South Bronx, and was composed of four community board districts (Community Boards 1, 3, 4, and 5). Later, SoBRO scaled back the project study area to Port Morris, a loosely defined, 500-acre (est.) neighborhood comprising the southern-most "U-shaped" waterfront perimeter of the Bronx. The Port Morris area was subsequently sub-divided into three distinct subzones, or study areas, each to be studied independently under their own respective BOA Nominations. In June 2008 SoBRO's Port Morris BOA Program came to focus in on the western-most subzone that fronts on the Harlem River, taking on the official new title "Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA." (An in-depth explanation of this process and its rationale is presented in Section E.)

An official Step 1 Pre-Nomination Study was not prepared for the originally proposed larger area or the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. However, because of SOBRO's 36-year presence in the South Bronx, and its extensive familiarity with the area, it was able to develop and submit the information necessary to comply with the NYS DOS Step 1 BOA Program requirements. The acceptance of these materials, fulfilling the Step 1 requirements, has allowed SoBRO to proceed through Step 2 of the BOA process, and prepare this Nomination Report for the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA.

This Nomination Report documents the thorough analysis of the study area that was conducted, and provides recommendations on how to implement the area-wide strategy for the Harlem Riverfront BOA, which has been developed in cooperation and consultation with the local community and its various stakeholders. SoBRO has prepared this report with the goal of completing the Step 2 process, and advancing to Step 3 of the BOA Program, which would include more in-depth environmental site assessments, and ultimately re-use plans for the Strategic Sites identified in this report.

C. PORT MORRIS BOA PROGRAM INTENT & PURPOSE

From the outset, the intent of SoBRO's Port Morris BOA Program was to take a comprehensive look at the South Bronx as an inter-connected system of communities, neighborhoods, land uses, and infrastructure networks, and identify catchment areas that presented challenges and/or opportunities for development that could serve to strengthen the overall South Bronx region, which SoBRO considers to be the emergent gateway of the Borough of the Bronx. SoBRO understood at the time of its original BOA application that most lots in the Bronx would likely face some level of environmental contamination (due to former industrial uses), and

believed that conducting these broader planning analyses with a brownfield-centered approach would facilitate a new and much needed type of local community engagement and awareness around environmental issues, as well as help guide local development in a safe, responsible, and sustainable manner.

As the Port Morris BOA study area refined and narrowed to ultimately focus on the Harlem Riverfront subzone, BOA funds were used to hone in on specific "Strategic Sites" (detailed in Chapter 3), and to work with property owners to better understand the environmental problems hindering optimal use, as well as implement strategies to assist owners in moving towards site remediation and redevelopment. This due diligence work under the BOA program involved preliminary evaluation of the type, extent and cost of remediation, as well as identifying development opportunities for these sites and advocating for their development. Facilitating socially and environmentally responsible cleanup and development of Strategic Sites became the fundamental purpose of SoBRO's BOA program in the Harlem Riverfront study area.

D. LEAD PROJECT SPONSORS

This section describes the organizational structure of SoBRO (as the local community-based organization sponsoring the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA), its relevant experience and achievements in the area, and its relationship to other local entities and government agencies.

Through its systematic process of identifying high-priority brownfield sites, assessing their remediation issues, and developing suitable redevelopment scenarios, SoBRO not only strives to remediate existing and former industrial properties but to spur the revitalization of entire neighborhoods. Because of its longstanding efforts to revitalize portions of the Bronx, SoBRO recognizes that the BOA Program has the potential to serve as an important revitalization tool.

SoBRO's ongoing efforts of transforming vacant and abandoned properties into productive uses (as described in detail below), coupled with an ability to bring together private and public stakeholders, makes SoBRO uniquely qualified to successfully implement the BOA Program in the South Bronx in a development- and transaction-oriented way. The BOA Program marries area-wide brownfield planning and community vision with specific site development, which works in harmony with SoBRO's grand mission to "Build a Better Bronx."

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

SoBRO was established in 1972 to reverse the flight of businesses and jobs from the South Bronx. A dynamic not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life in the South Bronx, SoBRO works to achieve its goal by supporting local businesses, planning and developing affordable and mixed-income housing, and by providing educational and workforce programs for youths and adults.

Recognizing that rebuilding a community must be a multifaceted effort, SoBRO has expanded its programming over the years to satisfy the growing needs of the South Bronx community. Following are a few examples of services SoBRO currently offers to the community:

- Programs for youth that combine academic skills and work readiness training with leadership development activities, while exposing participants to new ideas and possibilities;
- Job training, basic education, and job placement services that prepare low-income, unemployed, and underemployed individuals for the workplace;
- Financial literacy training programs to foster self-sufficiency within the community;
- Development and management of high quality and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families as well as supportive housing for individuals with special needs;
- Small businesses assistance programs, which help entrepreneurs to grow, create jobs, and increase their investment in the community; and
- Commercial revitalization programs, designed to attract new and retain existing businesses to the commercial corridors in the South Bronx.

In 36 years of service to the South Bronx, SoBRO has:

- Created a climate in the South Bronx that helped to attract more than $350 million in capital investment;
- Helped to create and retain more than 36,000 jobs for area residents;
- Assisted more than 30,000 South Bronx residents in entering the New York City workforce through education and career development programs;
- Developed 483 units of affordable and special needs housing, with an additional 600 units currently in various stages of development;
- Served over 10,000 youth through its Youth Center (opened in 1997) and supporting programs; and
- Encouraged and managed the investment of over $22 million, used to rebuild and upgrade commercial districts.

SoBRO's excellence has been recognized with awards at the City, State, and federal level. Rewards received include:

- 2008 "Serving Youth Award" New York City Employment Training Coalition;
- 2004 "New York State Small Business Not-for-Profit of the Year" Award;
- 2003 U.S. Department Of Labor PepNET Award for the SoBRO Youth Center;
- 2002 Met Life Foundation Community Police Partnership Award;
- 2001 Lucy G. Moses Historic Preservation Award for the Brook Avenue Gardens building; and
- 2000 NYC Department of Business Services Barbara Wolff Award for Excellence.

RELEVANT COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION AND BROWNFIELD DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

SoBRO realized early on that in order to revitalize communities, vacant lots needed to be re-inhabited by businesses and homes, poverty had to be fought by creating new jobs and providing training for job applicants, and young people needed to be given new opportunities for a bright future.

SoBRO's strong relationships with local communities and its comprehensive approach to economic development planning makes it an ideal applicant and partner for the BOA Program. As an experienced commercial and residential real estate developer and development consultant, SoBRO has helped to substantially increase economic opportunities in the region and boost the overall revitalization of the Bronx.

As part of realizing its mission to revitalize neighborhoods and communities, SoBRO has gained extensive experience in transforming abandoned lots and vacant buildings into new productive uses. Some relevant examples are included below:

Phillips Jones Building. A formerly vacant 120,000-square-foot factory building in the heart of Port Morris, SoBRO renovated this key building and in doing so reversed the further abandonment of the area. Today the Philips Jones building provides jobs for nearly 125 employees and serves as a major anchor in the Port Morris Economic Development Zone.

Brook Avenue Gardens. Formerly a casket factory, SoBRO renovated this building into 79 units of high quality housing for low-income families. This project won a Lucy Moses Historic Preservation Award for exceptional design. Issues of contamination in the foundation and rear yard were successfully remediated. This development illustrates that a brownfield designation on a property can have a positive influence on its redevelopment.

Taino Plaza. Taino Plaza, a 104-unit multi-family residential building, occupies a once vacant lot in the Morrisania neighborhood of the South Bronx. The reclamation and redevelopment of this vacant lot, which suffered from soil contamination issues, into an attractive and efficient affordable housing project that incorporates commercial space and green building features, has rendered it a catalyst for community revitalization.

SoBRO Center. The upper floors of the former Hearn's Department Store, located in the "Hub" in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx, were vacant for over two decades. In an undertaking that serves as a citywide example for the renovation and reuse of abandoned second floors, SoBRO redeveloped 32,000 square feet of space and created the SoBRO Center, which now houses all of its programmatic and administrative functions.

Wendy's at Keltch Park. SoBRO, in partnership with a Wendy's franchisee, converted a long vacant New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) comfort station into a restaurant serving the East 170th Street retail corridor.

The Gateway Building. Located along the Major Deegan Expressway at the intersection of Willis Avenue, this former hotel is one of the most visible buildings as one first enters the Bronx from Manhattan via East River Drive. In 2009, SoBRO renovated this vacant building and converted the 23 units into affordable housing.

RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Having served the Bronx community for over 36 years, SoBRO has developed strong relationships with local government agencies and community leaders, who continue to provide crucial support to planning projects in the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. Since 2004, when SoBRO began working on the development of a BOA proposal for the Port Morris area, SoBRO has collaborated with local entities and representatives in the South Bronx to solicit input and develop a better understanding of the community's concerns, so that the

development and advancement of the Harlem Riverfront BOA would proceed from a position of community consensus.

As SoBRO has proceeded through the BOA Program it has continued its ongoing collaboration with the following elected officials, government agencies, and local community partners in the South Bronx:

Elected Officials:

- Jose E. Serrano - United States Congress, 16th District
- Carmen E. Arroyo - New York State Assembly, 84th District
- Maria del Carmen Arroyo - New York City Council, District 17
- Helen D. Foster - New York City Council, District 16
- Joel Rivera - New York City Council, District 15

Government Agencies:

- New York State Department of State (DOS)
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), Bronx Office
- The Office of the Bronx Borough President
- NYC Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation (OER)
- New York City Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
- New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
- NYC Mayor's Office of Industrial & Manufacturing Businesses (IMB)
- The Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC)

Community Partners:

- Bronx Community Board 1 (CB1)
- Nos Quedamos / We Stay
- Senda Church
- Hub Third Avenue BID

E. COMMUNITY VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The central objective of the BOA Program is to encourage the development of abandoned, vacant, or underutilized brownfield sites in a manner that is compatible with the needs and desires of the local community. Through its long-standing relationships with the community and local knowledge of the area, SoBRO has been working with the public and our community partners mentioned above to include their vision for the Harlem Riverfront BOA study area. In 2008, SoBRO solicited the involvement of Nos Quedamos, a South Bronx based environmental justice organization who assisted SoBRO in creating the BOA Community Coalition (discussed further in Chapter 2) to organize and facilitate several open planning forums. Attendance at

these meetings included local Church members, business people from the area, and community residents, all of whom contributed to the conversation about community needs and how they could tie into area-wide and site-specific brownfield revitalization planning and BOA project design. Additionally, SoBRO organized and presented the activities of the BOA program to the Steering Committee whose membership includes an array of SoBRO's community-based and city/state agency representatives that support SoBRO's site-driven approach to brownfield redevelopment planning in the South Bronx. Steering Committee members include elected officials, CB1, Nos Quedamos, the DEC Region 2 Office, the Bronx Office of the DCP, the Office of the Bronx Borough President, and the Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation (OER), among others. Chapter 2 further details SoBRO's community outreach process. Refer to Appendices B and C for materials related to community and Steering Committee outreach.

The following section describes SoBRO's assessment of the community's vision, needs, and priorities. The section is followed by a description of SoBRO's concept of how resources provided through the BOA Program can be used to support these community goals.

IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY VISION IN RELATION TO THE BOA PROGRAM

To better understand the needs and desires of the local community, which lies within Bronx Community Board District 1, SoBRO conducted public meetings and met with members of the Community Board (CB1). SoBRO's outreach activities are ongoing, and are detailed in Chapter 2, "Public Participation Plan and Techniques to Enlist Partners." In addition, SoBRO reviewed each of the Statement of Community District Needs (District Needs Report) compiled by the community board for FY 2006 and FY 2007. The District Needs Report recorded a wide range of issues important to the local community. The majority of the issues identified tie in directly with BOA Program objectives and many are addressed through SoBRO's unique development-oriented approach to the BOA process (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, "Analysis of the Proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area"). Among the issues with the highest priority were the presence of vacant lots and environmental degradation, the need for commercial revitalization and job creation, and the lack of affordable housing.

Of all topics discussed in the District Needs Report, economic development was the most prevalent. The section dedicated to economic development issues cited the need to create and retain local businesses and jobs as the most important task. However, the report also recognized the direct impact the loss of jobs has on the physical environment. It stated that the "empty, unused and underutilized commercial and industrial properties are a result of the loss of retail and manufacturing jobs in the district."

Acknowledging the fact that many of the vacant properties face environmental issues because of past industrial uses, the District Needs Report also expressed the need to address brownfields and the remediation of contaminated properties. Bronx CB1 explicitly endorses the "enactment of a corrective action plan for these parcels."

Because of the community's desire to retain local industry and employment, the District Needs Report expresses CB1's support for the Federal Empowerment Zone program and the New York State Empire Zone program in the South Bronx (both administered locally by SoBRO). See

Appendix A for detailed information about these programs. The incentives offered under these programs may also be brought to bear in this area in coordination with the BOA Program.

CB1's District Needs Reports also discussed the increasing need for affordable housing. The report described that housing has become less affordable in the district, citing the high poverty rate and high percentage of household income spent on rent. In a telephone interview in December 2008, Mr. Cedric Lofton, CB1's District Manager, explained that after the population declined significantly about 35 years ago, the area has witnessed the demolition of many multi-story buildings and development of lower density single- and two-family homes. This came about in direct response to a lower demand for multi-family units, but was also done to encourage home ownership. Today, with the influx of new population, the demand has shifted again and the board focuses on creating denser multi-family housing opportunities.

As subsequent sections of this report will explain, brownfield properties can be strong candidates for housing development for a wide range of incomes, and can help to satisfy the growing need for diverse housing options.

It is clear from these reports and the discourse at public meetings that the community feels it lacks in several arenas; in addition to housing, employment and job readiness issues were raised frequently. Key contributors to these overarching issues, expressed by community members, included poor quality of childhood and high school education, and a general lack of practical information (e.g., how to join labor unions, where to obtain worker training, how to navigate the higher education system). Community members also expressed concern about gentrification -- that new "trendier" development occurring in their neighborhoods on vacant lots could conceivably raise the cost of living and displace current residents.

COMMUNITY VISIONING FINDINGS

Through the process of compiling all of the above information, a collective community vision emerges: to improve social and economic conditions by improving access to housing, professional, and educational opportunities for existing residents. Such opportunity empowers a community to preserve its geographic presence as well as advocate for and attract new investment, development and other services and amenities that boost overall quality of life.

Specifically relative to the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the study area, the following goals were found to be important to the community:

- Protect the public from potentially dangerous contamination emitted by current or former industrial sites;
- Increase affordable housing and more diverse housing options;
- Retain and attract local industry and employment; and
- Ensure that a significant portion of new jobs created by brownfield redevelopment are reserved for community residents and workers.

In addition to general housing and commercial development, some specific uses suggested by the community for vacant brownfield-impacted sites included: open/recreational space, job centers, and Head Start and daycare centers.

SOBRO'S GOALS

While some industrial businesses in the Port Morris area generate substantial economic activity, a general decline in manufacturing—in New York City and in cities around the country—left behind many underutilized properties that contribute to the visual and economic blight of this area. In addition, the industrial legacy of manufacturing and auto-related operations in Port Morris and the South Bronx has left significant subsurface contamination. While much of the contamination occurred decades ago, the majority of the issues remain unaddressed today. Identifying these brownfield sites, developing a reuse plan that is compatible with needs of the community and all stakeholders, and ultimately redeveloping the sites into productive uses is what SoBRO envisions for the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA and for the greater South Bronx area.

SoBRO believes that by improving environmental quality and restoring brownfield properties according to the needs of the community, new jobs will be created, much needed affordable housing will be developed, and abandoned properties will once again contribute to the City's tax rolls. Overall, the strategic redevelopment of brownfield sites within the Harlem Riverfront BOA study area will serve to anchor economic and strengthen the social and economic framework of the historically underserved South Bronx area.

F. PROJECT BACKGROUND, OVERVIEW, AND DESCRIPTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

GREATER PORT MORRIS BOA

When SoBRO originally applied for the BOA Program in 2004, a much larger area of the South Bronx was selected to be included in the application. This original larger area included a major portion of the South Bronx, and was composed of four community board districts (Community Boards 1, 3, 4, and 5).

SoBRO first scaled back the project study area in 2006 to include only the Port Morris neighborhood of the South Bronx, a 550-acre area generally coincident with CB1's boundaries referred to henceforth as the "Greater Port Morris BOA." The Greater Port Morris BOA study area shares a large portion of the Port Morris Empire Zone and is coterminous with the Industrial Business Area, its formal boundary creating a "U-shaped" corridor along the southernmost coastline of the South Bronx. The description of the boundaries for the formerly proposed Greater Port Morris BOA was as follows:

The 149th Street Bridge and Harlem River constituted the northwestern boundary and commencement point of the "U-shaped' area. From that point, the outer boundary followed the coastline of the Harlem and East River to the point where it meets the east terminus of East 149th Street. Moving inland, the interior boundary followed East 149th Street westward until it intersected with Jackson Avenue, at which point it turned south to the point of intersection with East 134th Street. Following a westward direction to the intersection at Lincoln Avenue, East 134th Street comprised the northern interior boundary of the U-shaped area. The interior boundary then followed Lincoln and Morris Avenues northward to the point where Morris Avenue intersects with East 149th Street. The boundary then turned westward to meet the

commencement point at East 149th Street and the Harlem River. The boundaries of the Greater Port Morris BOA are illustrated in **Figure 1-1**, which also depicts its location in the context of its surrounding neighborhood and City.

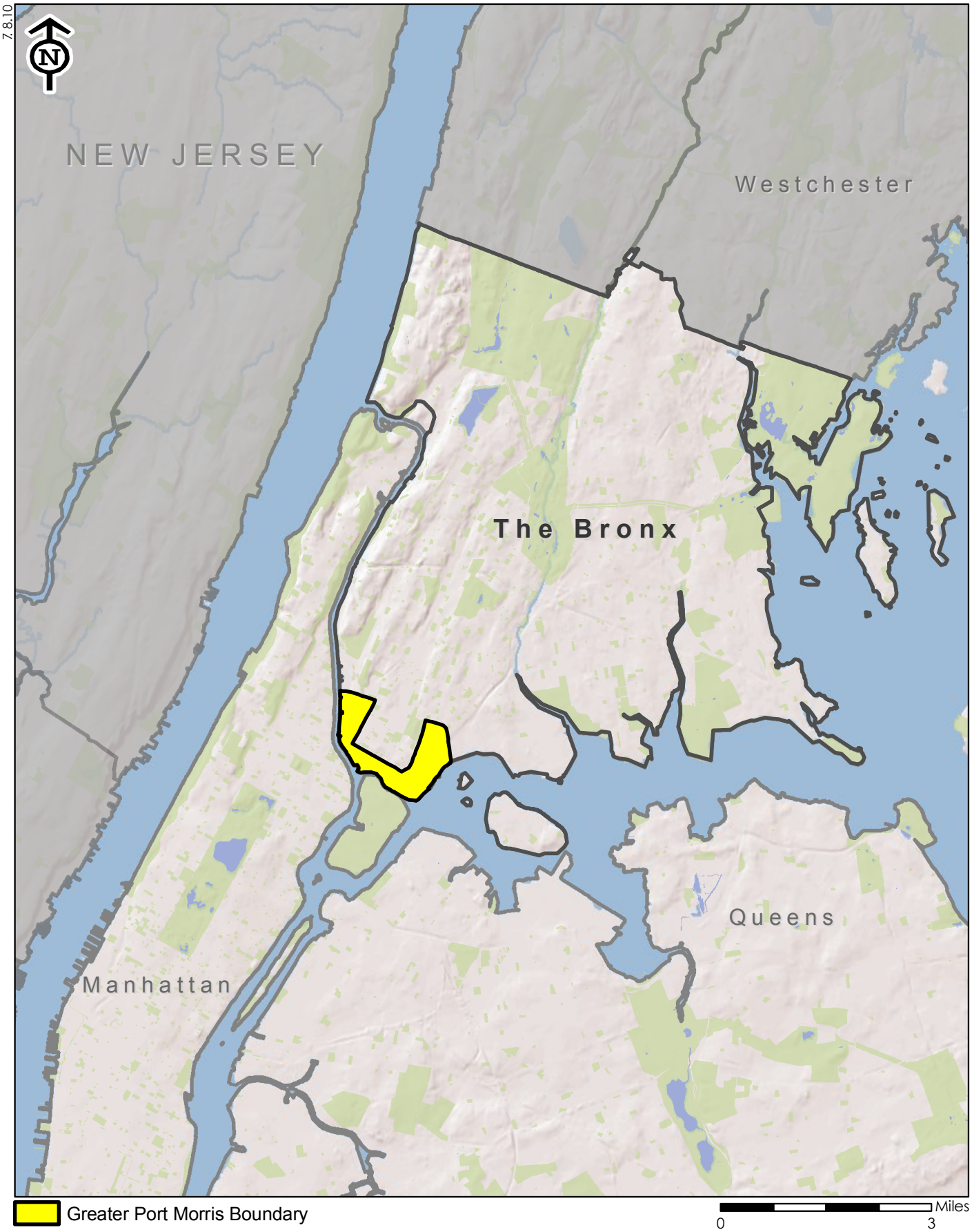
Earlier in the process, it seemed reasonable to include this Greater Port Morris area in the BOA Program, as the majority of the area is characterized by industrial uses, and would therefore be well suited for brownfield planning facilitated by the BOA Program. Another reason was that the same area had joint designation as a Federal Empowerment Zone, a New York State Empire Zone, and a New York City Industrial Business Zone (see Appendix A for more information about these programs). SoBRO anticipated that the various grants and tax incentives offered by these programs could provide additional resources and help induce owners to participate in the revitalization efforts.

SUBDIVISION INTO INDIVIDUAL ZONES

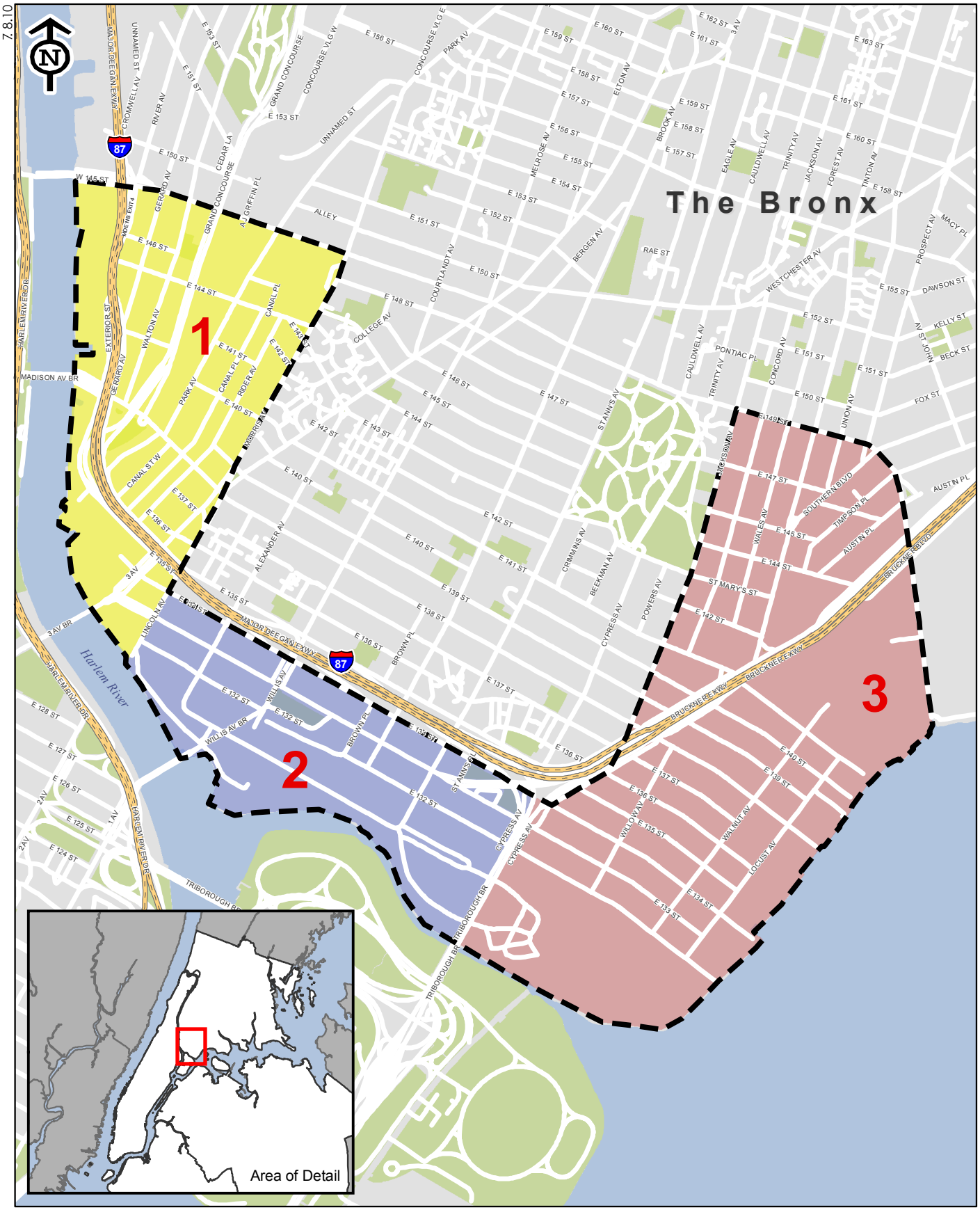
Upon further examination, SoBRO came to recognize the smaller, distinct neighborhoods or catchment areas contained within the Greater Port Morris BOA area, each of which having unique characteristics and development needs. Furthermore, the sheer size of this planning area-- approximately five square miles with a total population of approximately 400,000--made analysis under one BOA Nomination study unwieldy and too difficult to focus effectively. For these reasons, the Greater Port Morris BOA was subdivided into three smaller, distinctive, more manageable zones. This decision was supported by a number of discussions about the project area boundary with NYS DOS, community members, and consultants, who believed that centering on smaller subzones would help ensure a more targeted, efficient, implementation process. In that regard, focusing on individual planning zones would allow SoBRO to design a development driven program that focuses on the delivery of site-specific projects. These BOA subzones would help create an immediate, more localized impact, within reasonable timeframes, while providing more flexibility in terms of funding.

As a result of the process described above, the Greater Port Morris BOA was sub-divided into three distinct subzones with corresponding study areas that follow distinct neighborhood boundaries, shown in **Figure 1-2.** The study area of zone #1 became known as the Harlem Riverfront BOA, and is the focus of the Nomination study contained herein. Zone #2 shall be called the Bronx Kills BOA study area, and zone #3 shall be called the East River BOA study area. It is SoBRO's intention to advance separate, independent Step 2 BOA Nomination studies in the latter two subzones, applications for which are currently under review by NYS DOS.

The Harlem Riverfront BOA study area, subject of this Nomination Report, houses a mix of retail, residential, and industrial uses, and is described in detail in the following section. The Bronx Kills subzone is home to the mixed-use Bruckner Arts & Antique District, and would be suitable for additional residential and commercial development. The East River subzone is a concentrated industrial hub, integral for Bronx employment and New York City's overall economic vitality.



Community Context
Figure 1-1



Greater Port Morris BOA - Individual Zones

Figure 1-2

G. BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

This section describes the physical limits of the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA and provides the justification for the selection of this area for examination in this Step 2 Nomination Report.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The proposed Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA is the area bounded by East 149th Street to the north, the Harlem River to the south and west, and Lincoln/Morris Avenues to the east, as shown in **Figure 1-3**.

Figure 1-4 depicts the location of potential brownfields and underutilized, vacant, or abandoned properties within this area, including parking facilities, vacant land and buildings, and properties with a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0-1.0 (generally properties that are less than 50 percent built-out in accordance with current zoning). These properties are generally concentrated along the Grand Concourse central corridor, along the Harlem River waterfront, and in the area bounded by East 138th Street to the north, the Major Deegan to the south, Third Avenue to the east, and Canal Street to the west.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Most of the preliminary work undertaken by SoBRO in the formerly envisioned Greater Port Morris BOA area was concentrated on the area of the Harlem Riverfront / Lower Concourse, and so was therefore selected as the first of the three smaller zones for which a full-scale Nomination study is prepared.

A number of recently certified rezoning actions and developments contribute to the revitalization opportunities in the Harlem Riverfront BOA area. Among these are the following notable key efforts that have recently been put in place or are in the process of being realized:

- Rezoning of Special MX district along 134th Street (1997);
- 11-Block Expansion of the MX Zone boundaries (2005);
- Lower Concourse Rezoning (2009);
- Special Harlem River Waterfront District (part of Lower Concourse Rezoning);
- Gateway Center Project (completed 2009);
- New Yankees Stadium (opened in 2009); and
- Willis Avenue Bridge Replacement Project (projected completion date 2012).

Of these, the most notable is the recently certified Lower Concourse Rezoning, which allows for a mix of uses in the heavily industrial area. Adopted in June 2009, the rezoning area largely coincides with the boundaries of the Port Morris Harlem Riverfront BOA. The Lower Concourse Rezoning is expected to spur residential, commercial, and additional industrial development over the next decade within the study area in particular, as well as in nearby surrounding areas. The Harlem Riverfront BOA Program will not only support these rezoning efforts, but will provide a development vision that is consistent with the community's needs, and will assesses