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WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

JUN 13 1963

**THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**



# **ANNADALE-HUGUENOT AREA**

**URBAN RENEWAL DESIGNATION**

**APRIL 17, 1963**

Gaylord  
SHELF BINDER  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
Stockton, Calif.

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

*Designation, pursuant to Section 504, Article 15 of the General Municipal Law of New York (Urban Renewal Law), of the area bounded by Amboy Road, Arden Avenue, Raritan Bay, and the existing lines of Wolfe's Pond Park, Borough of Richmond, as an Area Appropriate for Urban Renewal (Annadale-Huguenot Area).*

(CP-17756)

April 17, 1963.

On June 18, 1962 the City Planning Commission submitted to the Mayor its 1962-1963 Urban Renewal Study Program. An outgrowth of the Commission's ongoing comprehensive planning and Community Renewal Programs, this document outlined clear-cut policy goals and renewal objectives:

1. Emphasizing conservation and rehabilitation;
2. Minimizing relocation of households;
3. Providing a net addition to the housing supply with emphasis on middle income and low-rent housing;
4. Strengthening our economic base; and
5. Relating renewal to the development of essential cultural, recreational, institutional and transportation facilities.

In addition, the Commission outlined basic operating principles which were used in selecting its choice of renewal areas. These criteria included renewal opportunities which are non-recurring; which offered multiple planning advantages; which alleviated imminent threat of blight; which complemented existing renewal activity; which provided a logical starting point; and which offered a promise of successful local participation and self-help.

Among the areas proposed for urban renewal study was the Annadale-Huguenot Area. For this area, the Commission proposed a broad planning program, described as follows in the Urban Renewal Study Program report of June, 1962.

"This huge vacant land resource in South Richmond presents an opportunity to properly plan a prime residential area before a rush of new construction may prevent sound community development. This very substantial area lies between Amboy Road and the Lower New York Bay, running northeast from Wolfe's Pond Park.

"In addition to serving as a large potential source of new housing, the area is proposed for renewal study because it requires remapping and replatting.

"A large proportion of the area is in City ownership as a result of *in rem* proceedings. The extensive *in rem* acreage is indicative of premature and poor subdivision, with streets laid out in an obsolete gridiron pattern, failing to take advantage of the natural gifts of the topography.

"Preliminary studies have shown that much of the area now mapped for streets can be utilized more productively, thus effecting extensive savings in construction and maintenance. It is expected that overall planning will insure adequate provision of services when they are needed, and the proper location of community facilities as an integral part of the plan.

"With completion of the Verrazano Bridge and the anticipated new development in Staten Island, successful renewal of this area will take on added significance by serving as a pattern for the logical development of the City's last large remaining sources of vacant, buildable land."

Before application can be made for Federal funds to assist in the preparation of more detailed plans and subsequent renewal action, it is necessary to designate the area as an Area Appropriate for Urban Renewal pursuant to Section 504, Article 15 of the General Municipal Law of the State of New York. Such designation is the subject of this report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The Annadale-Huguenot Area consists of a large, generally undeveloped section of southeastern Staten Island more than 1,000 acres in size. It is bounded on the northwest

by Amboy Road; on the southwest by the existing lines of Wolfe's Pond Park; on the southeast by Raritan Bay; and on the northeast by Arden Avenue. The area lies to the southeast of the tracks of the Staten Island Rapid Transit Line which generally parallel Amboy Road.

The Annadale-Huguenot Area lies in the path of residential expansion along the south shore of Richmond. It is characterized by a number of attractive environmental features, including a mile and a half of shorefront, and a varied topography with several ponds, a small lake, gentle slopes and extensive wooded areas. Approximately 70 per cent of the total area is vacant.

There has been limited development in the area, generally of single-family homes. Currently, some 550 buildings are in year-round use. For the most part, the year-round residential, institutional and small retail structures range in condition from fair to good. The balance of structures—mostly summer cottages—are located mainly near the shore. On the basis of exterior surveys, the seasonal structures are generally of poor quality, with nearly 85 per cent showing varying degrees of deterioration.

In the past few years, the population has gradually risen as new homes were built and occupied. However, the pace of new development in the Annadale-Huguenot Area has been slowed by the lack of sewer facilities, a limited public water supply network and an undeveloped street system. The population, including many homeowners and their families, numbered some 1,700, according to the 1960 census.

Two large public improvements are currently affecting the Annadale-Huguenot Area. Wolfe's Pond Park, under the State-City expansion of regional parks, is being extended eastward along the Shore to Arbutus Lake and also eastward between Hylan Boulevard and the railroad line in a strip three blocks wide.

As a part of the urban arterial system, the Shore Front Drive, a proposed mixed traffic limited access route along the Bay, is in the planning stage, with construction expected sometime between 1965 and 1975.

#### CITIZEN INFORMATION PROGRAM

A detailed presentation of the basis for inclusion of the Annadale-Huguenot Area in the 1962-63 Urban Renewal Study Program took place in October 1962 at a community meeting arranged by the Borough President. This meeting was conducted in the Supreme Court Building in St. George and was attended by approximately 150 representatives of borough-wide and local community organizations.

Several afternoons and evenings in October were devoted to the display and discussion of maps and charts illustrating the planning principles which might guide the renewal of the area. The public was invited to examine these displays at Public School 5, located in the Annadale-Huguenot Study Area. Two open meetings also were conducted at Public School 5, at one of which the Borough President presided. Close to 300 persons, most of them local homeowners, were present at these meetings and displays. The Annadale, Huguenot, and Eltingville Civic Associations and representatives of local institutions also participated.

Other presentations were made to groups and organizations outside the immediate Study Area. Among these were the Women's Club of Staten Island, the Staten Island Protestant Council, the Staten Island section of the League of Women Voters, the Staten Island Planning Council, the Men's Club of the Unitarian Church and the Staten Island Real Estate Board.

As the study of the Area progressed, the tentative planning proposals including the definition of the recommended boundaries were discussed with civic groups. On January 16, 1963 a statement of tentative planning proposals was published by the Commission and the Public Hearing was announced for February 25, 1963. Local Civic Associations distributed 500 copies of the Planning Proposals and Announcement of the Public Hearing to residents in the Area. An additional 500 were sent to organizations, individuals and institutions throughout the Island.

During the period of study, questions forwarded to the Commission requesting further information or explanation of specific details of the study or the proposals were answered. Inquiries also were made by Staten Island residents directly to the Borough President's office. Many individuals telephoned and visited the Commission's offices to discuss aspects of the study in which they had a special interest.

Following the Public Hearing inquiries continued to be made and additional organizations requested that the proposals be presented to them at meetings.

#### RENEWAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the unique opportunity to convert an inadequately planned area in the path of imminent change to a sound residential community, the Commission recommends that the Annadale-Huguenot Area be planned as a predominantly open land project under the Urban Renewal Law.

The Commission's recommendations are intended to develop the full potential of this area as a model residential community favored by attractive suburban-like surroundings. The cardinal consideration is that of timing—to delay in carrying out these recommendations would irretrievably commit this area to random development.

While the precise planning of housing types will be dependent upon detailed plans for this area, the Commission believes the area would best be developed primarily for one- and two-family houses with a limited number of low-rise garden apartments adjacent to shopping areas and major thoroughfares.

The Commission's recommendations for renewal hinge on the replatting of the land and streets. These plans should seek to provide practical block and lot sizes, eliminate unnecessary streets, protect residential areas through the appropriate design of major and secondary arteries, and take advantage of hills, ponds and other natural features. More efficient design will contribute to improved traffic circulation, safety, and a good living environment, and bring about major savings in construction and street maintenance. The elimination of street will also provide additional space for new construction. It is estimated that some 100 acres could thus be returned to productive use.

In planning this project, existing development should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. Every effort should be made to avoid the removal of year-round dwellings. If there are instances in which this may be unavoidable, the Commission recommends that the homeowner be given the option of having his house moved to a suitably improved lot within the renewal area, or of taking an award. Further, if acquisition of private property is necessary, the possibility should be explored of assigning a priority to such owners in the sale of land by the City during the project's implementation.

It will also be necessary to provide for a full range of facilities to serve the community—education, institutional, religious and commercial development would be a vital part of the overall plan. Two new schools to meet the needs of the area already have been authorized in the 1963-1964 Capital Budget. The schools are Public School 55, just east of the area on Koch Boulevard and Junior High School 7 at Hylan Boulevard and Huguenot Avenue. To provide for additional future needs, sites for schools and other community facilities should be reserved in the course of detailed project planning. It is also possible to expand one or more schools in the community to provide additional capacity as needed.

Regarding the proposed major public developments in the area—Wolfe's Pond Park Extension and the Shore Front Drive—close attention should be paid in the preparation of a renewal plan to their impact on the community. Provision to protect the community from the expected heavy recreation traffic on the Shore Front Drive and for convenient access to beaches for residents are important factors in renewal planning. Access to Wolfe's Pond Park and the location of facilities to serve the community are also matters to be considered in the renewal plan.

While it is important that this large tract of land be planned as an entity to insure well-coordinated development, it may be necessary to phase the execution of the plan. However, in view of the mounting pressures for the development of land in Staten Island, it is critical that project planning be initiated as rapidly as possible.

#### PUBLIC HEARING

At the hearing, held on February 25, 1963, twenty-two speakers appeared. They included representatives of local, borough, and city civic, community, religious and business organizations as well as individual residents and other interested persons from the Area, its environs, and the Borough. Many of the questions raised had been brought to the attention of the Planning Commission at meetings and discussions in the community and the Borough, and through written communications.

A number of speakers at the hearing expressed full or conditional approval of the various principles announced by the Planning Commission. Those who spoke in favor represented the S.I. Division of the Protestant Council Church Planning Committee, the Women's City Club, two Staten Island Civic Associations, the Citizens Housing and Planning Council as well as a number of civic leaders, residents and a local real estate dealer. Those

who were opposed represented the Staten Island Home Builders Association, the Real Estate Board, the Chamber of Commerce, three Civic Associations and Clubs, the *Catholic Worker* and a number of local residents.

Those who favored the proposed planning recommendations emphasized the desirability of planning for a safe, efficient and pleasant residential environment with facilities strategically located. They noted the mistakes of the past in allowing development before an adequate street pattern and planning for utilities had been achieved. They stressed the importance of timing. One spokesman requested that attention be given to sites for churches in connection with the renewal of the area. A number of spokesmen pointed to the misunderstandings of the proposals among the residents who had appeared in opposition.

Those in opposition to the proposal questioned the validity and necessity of urban renewal for the Area. They expressed fear of governmental interference with the use of vacant and improved properties including the imposition of arbitrary rehabilitation requirements for existing buildings. Some suggested that the process would delay the development of the Area. One witness indicated his belief that the zoned densities would be increased as a result of the study. Question was raised about the possible duplication of costs of mapping already done. The validity of using Title I financing to help in providing streets and utilities was questioned. Fear was expressed that urban renewal would neglect the owners and builders needing small holdings. Control by federal agencies was anticipated and described as undesirable. Doubt was expressed about the wisdom of planning the Area while lacking a comprehensive plan for the rest of the South Shore.

#### CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING STATEMENTS

It became apparent during the course of the public hearing that, despite the earlier efforts of this Commission to carry out a thorough community information program in the Annadale-Huguenot Area, there still persisted confusion, apprehension and misunderstanding regarding the renewal proposal. The Commission was further confronted with the paradoxical situation of Annadale-Huguenot residents calling for a "hands off" policy so that they could be left undisturbed in what amounts to a semi-rural style of living, while at the same time builders, developers and real estate investors were also calling for a "hands off" policy so that they could hasten their own plans for developing this area. The very nature of this public hearing pointed up dramatically that there is no prospect of this section being by-passed in the mushrooming development of Staten Island; or, that by closing our eyes could we keep things as they had been in the past.

That is the point—change is coming. We can understand and sympathize with local residents who would wish things to remain as they have been. But this is not possible. Development is inevitably pushing out to the remaining vacant land areas in the City. Because of its geographical separation, Staten Island has been the last borough to feel the full force of the pressures. But with virtually all remaining vacant land in the City now developed or under development, and with the Verrazano Bridge soon to provide a physical—and psychological—link with the rest of the City, these pressures have now been directed to the Island. The Annadale-Huguenot area, with its large reserve of vacant land, is next in line to feel these pressures. The Staten Island builders made that clear enough.

It will not help local residents to attempt to hold back the tides of change. What they can do is to help to direct it. For there is a choice—change for good or change for bad. The Annadale-Huguenot area can be planned and developed with all the basic characteristics to insure that it becomes—and will remain—a modern and desirable residential community of a suburban nature. Or it can be developed with all the seeds of a suburban slum.

The City Planning Commission directed its attention to the Annadale-Huguenot area because it recognized its great potential. Here was a unique opportunity to protect an area by proper planning in advance of substantial development, instead of planning to correct the mistakes of the past as is true in so much of the City.

The Commission's preliminary studies were not for the purpose of seeking an urban renewal project, but for the purpose of seeing how the area could be best planned for decent residential development. It was only after examination of all the problems involved that the Commission determined, last June, that the urban renewal program offered the best and most practical means of replanning the area, and insuring that it would be developed in a well-planned, orderly manner with the proper provision of streets, sewers, utilities, schools, recreation and community facilities. The Commission's investigations convinced it that the area was eligible for federal assistance under the "predominantly open land" provisions of the urban renewal law.

Contrary to the opinion of some speakers, the Federal government is not taking over the planning of this area. Rather the City is attempting to obtain federal financial assistance available under provisions of the Urban Renewal Law which have heretofore, because of their nature, been applied to suburban and rural areas in other parts of the country.

Some speakers made the point that whatever federal funds might be used for the replanning of this area still come out of the taxpayer's pocket. That is quite true. Federal taxes provide the funds for federal assistance under the urban renewal program. However, the amount of these funds are limited. To the extent they are not used by the City, they will be used elsewhere. The local taxpayer will not be relieved—the only question will be whether he gets a return on his investment.

Nor does Federal urban renewal assistance mean federal dictation or control. During the planning and implementation stages of on-site renewal action, no federal staff is involved. The federal agency concerned, of course, would audit the accounting of the project and have a review and advisory function to insure that federal funds are not mis-spent. However, the Federal government does not in any way interfere in the determination of building types, density of development, nor does it require public housing in renewal areas.

In every way this would remain a local project, subject to local control. The Housing and Redevelopment Board, under whose jurisdiction detailed project planning and execution would be carried out, makes a practice of closely cooperating with interested community groups. As explained elsewhere in this report all plans developed would be subject to public hearings and would have to be approved by the City Planning Commission and the Board of Estimate before they could be carried out.

The recommendation for urban renewal action was made in order to enable the City to discharge its responsibilities and obligations for the proper development of the Annadale-Huguenot areas as a decent residential community. If the City is to be faulted at all, it is for not having acted sooner. Many speakers expressed resentment for past neglect of Island problems. But, as short as it is, there is still time to act decisively to insure that these problems are not repeated in the development of the Annadale-Huguenot area.

We are confronted with a great and almost unique opportunity to help insure that this area is wisely planned and developed. If we let this opportunity slip through our fingers we will be failing in our trust as planners and responsible citizens to the future welfare of our children and the generations to come.

Other questions, criticisms and objections expressed at the public hearing and in meetings with Commission staff members, as noted above, are reviewed as follows:

#### *Need for acquisition of property*

To remedy the defects of the present street layout and bring about safety and amenity would not necessitate the acquisition of all privately owned land. Furthermore, the basic width of 200 feet for blocks could be preserved. Before a detailed plan is prepared, however, it is impossible to estimate accurately the number of vacant parcels which would be affected.

Regarding existing year-round buildings: as previously stated, very few, if any, need be acquired. Before a detailed plan is in hand, it is impossible to give a precise number. Most or all of these structures could be integrated with the plan.

#### *Rehabilitation standards*

Specific standards of rehabilitation are worked out during the planning stage to suit the characteristics of the locality. Reasonable standards will assure residents that substandard dwellings will not downgrade the Area or injure the stability of property values.

#### *Delay in development*

In discussing the timing of development in the renewal process, it is important to distinguish between two types of property: 1) that which is held by private owners, and 2) the extensive *In Rem* holdings, which are lands in City ownership as a result of tax default and which are released through public auction for purchase and development.

Regarding the first: until the "Renewal Plan" is adopted, present owners of private properties may sell or develop their sites in accordance with existing zoning

and building regulations. As soon as the "Renewal Plan" is made official, owners may determine immediately whether their properties are to be affected. On parcels not affected, building will proceed according to provisions of the respective zoning districts.

The release of *In Rem* land, however, holds the key to the future development of this area. If *In Rem* land is sold at this time—a demand which was often repeated by building and real estate interests at the public hearing—we would, in effect, freeze this area in the very mold which we are seeking to improve. If these City-owned properties were made available at this time to the real estate interests eager to acquire them for development or speculative purposes, it would inevitably result in an undesirable street system, inadequate public facilities, impairment of school opportunities for new and existing residents, and serious limitation of residential amenities. Careful planning and phased release of *In Rem* land could prevent this.

#### Zoning

The eastern and western portions of the Area are zoned R1-2, which allows up to seven dwelling units per acre with minimum frontage of 60 feet. One- and two-family houses are allowed.

The central area and a strip below Amboy Road are zoned R3-2, which allows up to 26 dwelling units per acre, with a minimum frontage of 40 feet for types except row houses, and a minimum frontage of 18 feet for row houses.

The City Planning Commission does *not* recommend any change in these zoned densities. Certain limited areas, however, may be deemed desirable for local commercial zoning, since the zoning pattern at present does not attempt to designate such areas.

#### Street Mapping

Some "final maps" have been prepared for the Area. Most of the cost of these have covered measurement, determination of elevations, research on map sources, and survey and spotting of existing development. Revision of the street system in the Area—actually a small section of the total area for which maps were prepared—would use all these basic findings. The existing main roads as now aligned probably would become the major streets and feeder streets of the new plan. The cost of local street revision elsewhere would be negligible compared to resulting savings in capital expenditures and maintenance in the future. By revising the street system, surprisingly large savings to both the City and future owners will be realized.

#### Provision of streets and utilities

Developers have normally provided only part of the local network of streets and utilities, while some of the local and all of the major and secondary systems have been provided by the City. Under the new Charter (Section 229), developers or homeowners' associations can continue to pay for some of the local improvements. But the major costs, those involving the secondary and major systems, can be borne only by the City.

#### Consideration, at time of land disposition, of individual owners and small-scale builders

In the case of private property which will remain undisturbed, development of such parcels will proceed according to the present ownership pattern—which includes single lots, and a range of sizes in other plots.

As for the *In Rem* parcels and other occasional properties to be disposed of under the plan, the City Planning Commission is strongly recommending that ways be found to assure that those who seek single building lots or plots suitable for small-scale building will be accommodated. Many small and medium-sized *In Rem* parcels are interspersed among private holdings and will presumably be available in the same sizes.

#### Relation of the Annadale-Huguenot Area to the rest of the South Shore

The City Planning Commission and Borough officials are keenly aware of the need for planning in the South Shore and in all of Staten Island. Integration of a proper local and major street system with the system of freeways planned for the Island is particularly crucial. With this in mind, the Commission, in cooperation with offices of the Borough President, is at present studying the needs of the still undeveloped portions of the Borough and developing recommendations for a mapping program that will insure the orderly development of these areas. The Annadale-Huguenot proposal is one of the initial steps in this program.

## FINDINGS AND ADOPTION

The City Planning Commission hereby finds, pursuant to Section 504, Article 15 of the General Municipal Law of the State of New York (Urban Renewal Law), that the area bounded by Amboy Road, Arden Avenue, Raritan Bay, and the existing lines of Wolfe's Pond Park, Borough of Richmond, is a substandard and insanitary area as defined in Subdivision Four of Section 502 of the Urban Renewal Law, for reasons hereinabove listed in this report and that this area is appropriate for Urban Renewal.

The Commission recommends that the use and reuse of the designated area be predominantly residential, generally conforming to current zoning regulations, with provisions for appurtenant educational, recreational, institutional and commercial development.

The Commission finds that appropriate renewal treatment for this area would be replatting and remapping with reservation of suitable areas for public facilities. It is anticipated that the property now owned by the City and property to be subsequently acquired but not required for streets, parks and other public uses, will be released and sold for private development subject to zoning regulations.

The Commission recommends that any urban renewal plan for this area be based on a careful study of existing development in the area with a view toward the preservation of existing development to the fullest extent possible.

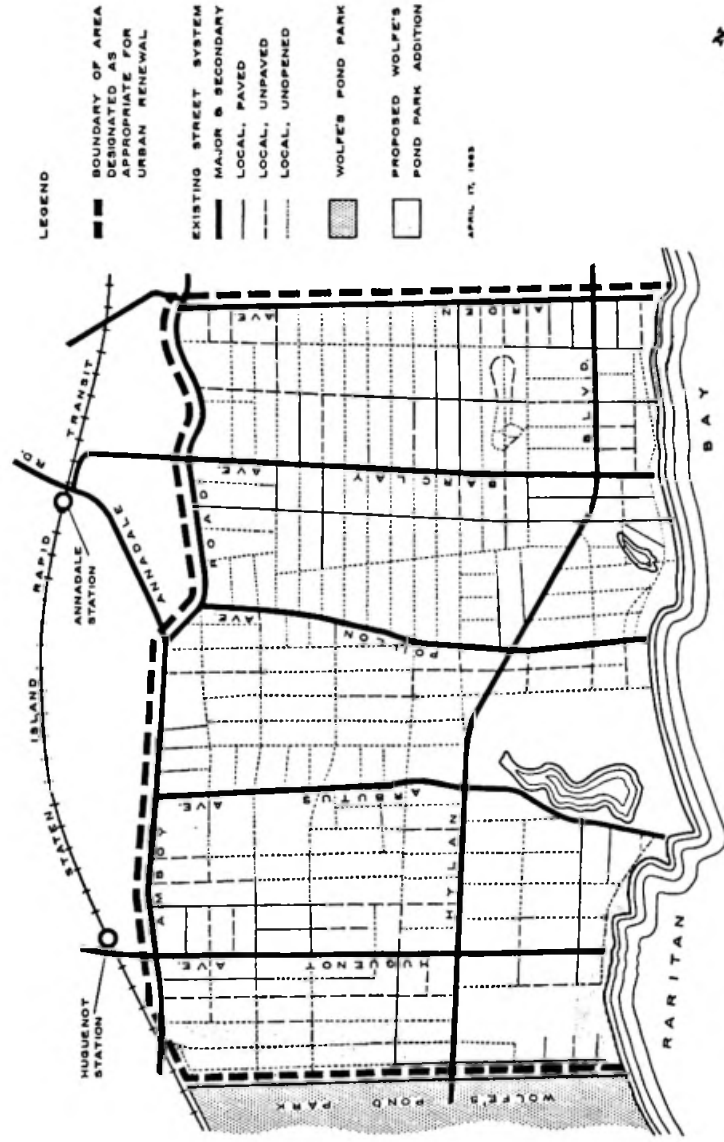
A study for a proposed Shorefront Arterial Highway has been prepared for the Borough President and for the Department of Parks. The City Planning Commission approved a map laying out an addition to Wolfe's Pond Park within the Annadale-Huguenot Area. This map is pending in the Board of Estimate.

It is recommended that the Renewal Plan be suitably related to the proposed Shorefront Highway and to the proposed Park Addition.

It is noted that the present action does not constitute approval of an Urban Renewal Plan. Such a plan is to be subsequently proposed by the Housing and Redevelopment Board and submitted to the Commission for review and certification after a public hearing in accordance with the provisions of the law. Final determination is subsequently made by the Board of Estimate, after another public hearing, as provided in the Urban Renewal Law.

FRANCIS J. BLOUSTEIN, Acting Chairman; JAMES FELT, HARMON H. GOLDSTONE, ELINOR C. GUGGENHEIMER, LAWRENCE M. ORTON, Commissioners.





**LEGEND**

- BOUNDARY OF AREA DESIGNATED AS APPROPRIATE FOR URBAN RENEWAL
- EXISTING STREET SYSTEM
- MAJOR & SECONDARY LOCAL, PAVED
- LOCAL, UNPAVED
- LOCAL, UNOPENED
- WOLFES POND PARK
- PROPOSED WOLFES POND PARK ADDITION

APRIL 17, 1963



**ANNADALE-HUGUENOT AREA**  
 BOROUGH OF RICHMOND - NEW YORK  
 CITY PLANNING COMMISSION - CITY OF NEW YORK