

ENVISIONING GATEWAY

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 22, 2007

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International Design Competition Launches for National Park in NYC New Vision, More Money for Gateway National Recreation Area Collaborative Partnership Calls For Iconic National Park by 2016

New York, N.Y.—The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), Van Alen Institute (VAI) and Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP) today announce the launch of an international public design competition to create a new vision for Gateway National Recreation Area, a 26,600-acre national park located in New York. “Envisioning Gateway: A Public Design Competition for Gateway National Park” is being underwritten by The Tiffany & Co. Foundation.

“The public design competition is a dynamic forum for civic engagement,” said VAI Executive Director Adi Shamir. “With the announcement of Envisioning Gateway, architects, landscape architects, ecologists, planners, and urban designers worldwide are invited to generate innovative and compelling proposals that reflect the transformative power of public participation and celebrate the unique potential of this urban national park.”

Since the creation of Gateway by Congress three decades ago, the park’s facilities have largely been neglected. The open landscapes of Sandy Hook, Fort Tilden, and Floyd Bennett Field suffer from chronic funding shortfalls, resulting in dwindling visitor services, crumbling buildings, and threatened natural resources. New habitats, marshes, and modern recreational facilities are needed to welcome park visitors and to create an environment that is suitable for park visitors, native wildlife, and plants to flourish.

“Gateway is New York City’s greatest unrealized asset, and what Olmsted did for Central Park, we are hoping to inspire for Gateway,” said NPCA Regional Director Alexander Brash. “Now is the time, as the Park Service prepares for its centennial in 2016 and as New York City looks to 2030, to re-envision Gateway as a great national park. The region’s 22 million inhabitants, and countless more visitors deserve a park that will engage them, complement the region’s needs, and flaunt the harbor’s natural and historical jewels.”

Recently, President Bush requested an unprecedented \$258 million increase for the operations budget of the National Park System, including a \$3.4 million operating increase for Gateway. His request jumpstarts the Administration’s National Park Centennial Challenge, an initiative to ensure

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national parks are restored by their 100th birthday in 2016. The Administration's proposed budget also includes a \$100-million matching grant program to spur philanthropic support for projects in the national parks.

As an example of private support for parks, and what could become part of the Administration's proposed matching program, The Tiffany & Co. Foundation has made a major philanthropic gift of \$500,000 to support the public design competition for Gateway National Recreation Area.

The focus of the competition will be twofold – competitors are being asked to consider Gateway at the regional scale, and to propose a redesign of Floyd Bennett Field relative to its position within the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway, including the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Riis Beach and Fort Tilden. Members of a distinguished and diverse competition jury will evaluate the submissions, and winning entries will be presented to the National Park Service for potential inclusion in the next planning phase of Gateway's General Management Plan, which is scheduled for 2009.

Columbia University GSAPP has prepared an extensive research report that examines Gateway's significance as an ecological, cultural, and recreational resource. The research report will provide background information on the park, and serve as a tool to inspire designers, planners, and stakeholders that will transform Gateway into a thriving national park.

"The Envisioning Gateway Public Design Competition will generate substantive dialogue on what it means to be a national park today, and how to create a new interface between one of the most vital cities in the world and its immediate environment," said Columbia University GSAPP Associate Professor Kate Orff.

Results of a public opinion poll conducted by Zogby International show that the majority of New York area residents desire an iconic national park in the region, but nearly half of them are unaware of and have never visited Gateway—a mere 50-minutes from Times Square. Area residents who have visited Gateway rate park facilities below average. This includes park facilities such as restrooms, beaches, historical buildings, and trails. Furthermore, the majority of City residents would prefer to travel there via subway, but most of Gateway is not currently connected to the New York subway system or PATH. The full poll results are available online at: www.npca.org/northeast/gateway.

Established by Congress as part of the National Park System in 1972, Gateway is one of the largest urban parks in the United States stretching from Queens, across areas of Brooklyn and Staten Island, to the northern tip of New Jersey. Thirty-four years later, Gateway continues to struggle to meet the aspirations of its founders, to negotiate its relationship with the communities that surround it, and to balance the goals of historic preservation, environmental conservation, and active recreation.

The design competition is presented and managed online. All essential information for competitors – including instructions, registration, guidelines, program details, guidelines, site plans, photographs and submission – can be found at www.vanalen.org/gateway.

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