

***CASE STUDIES OF
COASTAL REDRESS***

PREPARED BY ...

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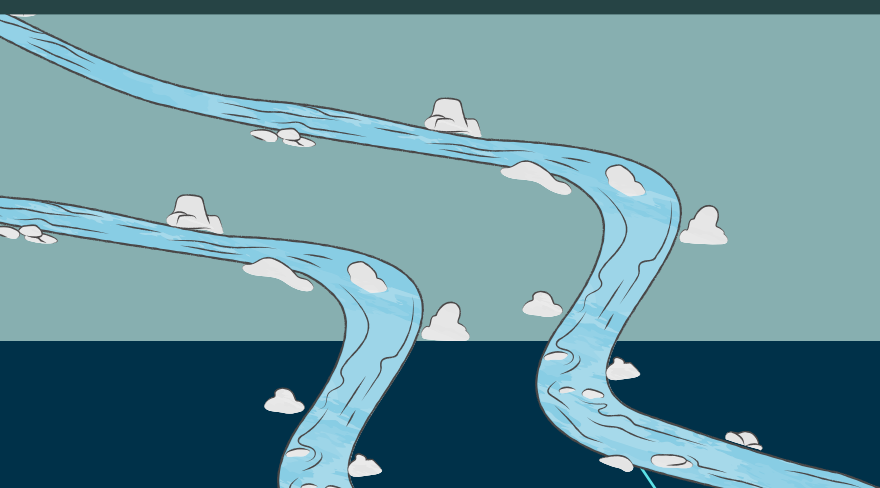
Friends of
Gadsden Creek

HARLEM ON THE RIVER



West Harlem, New York, NY

The stretch of land at the end of West 125th Street along the Hudson River waterfront in New York City's West Harlem was a parking lot bordered by chain link fence. The Harlem-on-the-River Project was conceived in 1998 when WE ACT partnered with New York City Community Board 9, West Harlem community leaders, and residents to develop a community-driven plan that would both increase access to the Harlem waterfront and raise interest in one of Northern Manhattan's neglected neighborhoods. With resident, officials, and Parks and Recreation representative approval, plans were negotiated, scrapped, and finally agreed on from 1999-2003, and officially opened as a park in 2009.



BARRIERS

- Coordination Among Stakeholders
- Funding
- Socioeconomic Barriers
- Environmental Barriers



STRATEGIES/TACTICS

- Advocacy in Local Politics
- Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)
- “Just Green Enough” Philosophy



SUCCESSES/WINS

- Restored Community & Resident Access to the Area
- Ensured Environmental Integrity
- Represented Community History and Needs
- Avoided Green Gentrification



MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

- **Community-Based Participatory Research**
 - CBPR actively involves community members in the planning process, ensuring that the voices of residents are heard and that the development and planning of the project directly reflected their needs and preferences.
- **“Just Green Enough”**
 - Just Green Enough philosophy dictates that the main goal of policies and developments that the project advocates for focuses on the improvement of quality of life over upscale investment and high-end amenities that are market-driven rather than community-driven.
- **Connections to Gadsden Creek**
 - Like Gadsden Creek, the edge of West 125th street was damaged by years of environmental racism stemming from a racially sited sewage treatment plant. Initial plans for “redeveloping” this site included building condominiums and luxury developments, which WE ACT opposed. WE ACT was able to be a community voice and enter the planning process after successfully suing New York Department of Environmental Protection for 1.1 million in damages for polluting the community. Their successful design process could be a model for a future of Gadsden Creek.

FREEDMEN'S TOWN



Houston, TX

Freedmen's Town is a child of Juneteenth, having been founded shortly after June 19th, 1865, where the last freed slaves from Galveston, Texas, settled along the Buffalo Bayou and located across a 40 block area in Houston, Texas in 1865. Freedmen's Town was the first African American community for the last freed enslaved people. Freedmen's Town has struggled with increased housing costs, demolition, crumbling infrastructure, and gentrification: 1986 Freedman's town had 530 historical structures most of whom were owned by Black residents--today only 30 structures remain. The Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy is a nonprofit organization, built out of years of grassroots activism, that aims to protect and preserve the history of Freedmen's Town through community engagement and re-education of the community.



BARRIERS

- Degradation of the district in the name of development
- Gentrification removing community supports
- Public apathy



STRATEGIES/TACTICS

- Partnerships with local government and institutions in the area
- Lobbying
- Historic Preservation
- Protesting/Activism



SUCCESSES/WINS

- The Freedmen's Town Visitor Center
- Freedmen's Town added to the UNESCO routes of the enslaved peoples project.
- \$140,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund



MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

• **Historic Preservation as Activism**

- Freedmen's Town has a rich physical history and has been threatened many times since the freed men and women settled in the area. The city of Houston has continuously tried to enact a planned removal of the bricks that are symbols of the resilience and self-sufficiency of those freed slaves. Over the years, the architecture of this area has been threatened and degraded. The neighborhood's physical history has been rapidly disappearing, and through the acts of activism, such as physical demonstrations of lying on the ground to showcase the value of the bricks, in the name of historic preservation, the Freedmen's Conservancy has preserved the historical landmarks within Freedmen's town.

• **Connections to Gadsden Creek**

- Similar to Gadsden Green, Freedman's Town is situated in a neighborhood that has experienced rapid gentrification and demolition by neglect. Residents understand the historical brick roads and remaining homes as an essential symbol of the community and have fought for generations to protect them as a way to protect remaining residents.
- Like Gadsden Creek, the Brick Roads have been neglected by the city and are now interwoven in livability issues, making drainage and transportation upgrades more difficult. Though it may be easier to tear up the roads, the community successfully pushed the city to give them the drainage they deserve without destroying community heritage.

LINNENTOWN



Athens, GA

Linnentown was a 20-acre community founded in the 1900s. The Linnentown residents were building up their wealth and reputation as a burgeoning community of skilled Black artisans, and were also known for the prominent Jeruel Academy/Union Institute school in the neighborhood. Before the town could reach the height of being a middle-class Black neighborhood, the city of Athens and University of Georgia razed the town to the ground to make way for “Urban Renewal” expanding UGA’s campus and sparking a grave act of injustice that citizens now demand recognition and redress for.



BARRIERS

- Institutional Resistance from the University of Georgia
- Impossibility of Direct Financial Reparations

STRATEGIES/TACTICS

- Community Mobilization
- Participatory Action Research
- Artistic Inspiration
- Created grassroots cash reparations program

SUCSESSES/WINS

- Establishment of the Linnentown Resolution (2021) acknowledging theft
- City allocated \$1.25 mil. to the Black Futures Center and \$1.25 mil. for home repairs and down payment assistance.
- 19 residents receive checks through Athens reparations project.



MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

- **Documentation and quantification of harm**
 - Former residents led participatory action research processes documenting the lasting harm caused by the dispossession of original Linnentown residents.
- **Artistic Inspiration**
 - The utilization of art and storytelling, such as musicals and quilting projects, to educate the public and honor the legacy of Linnentown and increase public awareness.
- **Connections to Gadsden Creek**
 - Like Fiddler's Green, Linnentown was a thriving center of Black homeownership targeted by "slum clearance" measures. Linnentown residents were paid a median price of \$5,600 for their homes compared with \$11,500 for similar white owned properties, amounting to \$5 million today. Linnentown residents successfully fought to receive recognition of this harm and worked around Georgia Law to receive \$2.5 million from the city as part of a larger project of redress. This could be a model for redress for current and former residents on the Westside.

RESOURCES

HARLEM ON THE RIVER

1. <https://www.weact.org/campaigns/west-harlem-piers-park/>
2. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/west-harlem-piers/history>
3. https://www.weact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Harlem_on_the_River-Making_a_Community_Vision_Real.pdf
4. https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/78909/slashley_1.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1
5. https://www.weact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Vasquez_2006.pdf
6. https://assembly.state.ny.us/member_files/068/20150204/index.pdf

FREEDMEN'S TOWN

1. <https://houstonlanding.org/well-get-it-done-whitmire-backs-restoration-of-houstons-freedmens-town/>
2. <https://houstonlanding.org/after-6-years-houstons-freedmens-town-opens-its-visitor-center/>
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G_rAoerv2w
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktchx-japBg>

LINNENTOWN

1. <https://athenscenterforracialjustice.org/history>
2. https://georgiamuseum.org/gmoa_blog/linnentown-quilt-project-honors-displaced-athens-community/
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linnentown>
4. <https://www.accgov.com/DocumentCenter/View/75675/Linnentown-Resolution---Final-Version>