

GOVERNORS ISLAND

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# Governors Island Update

**Manhattan Community Board 1  
Land Use and Economic Development Committee**





**The Trust's mission is to realize the full potential of Governors Island for the inspiration and enjoyment of all New Yorkers, demonstrating a bold vision for public space.**



# COVID-19 Season Update

## Governors Island opened July 15 for passive recreation activities.

- New ticket reservation system
- Equitable access to open space
  - Free ferries for NYCHA residents, community orgs, seniors
  - Service to Red Hook
- Over 100,000 tickets reserved
- COVID-19 Response Artist Residency Initiative with LMCC





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# Progress to Date



PROGRESS TO DATE

# Governors Island at a Glance

**172 acres at the center  
of New York Harbor**

**Minutes by ferry from  
Lower Manhattan and  
Brooklyn**

**120 acres of open space  
including new 43-acre  
park**

**1.3M SF of Historic  
Buildings, plus 33 acres  
designated for new  
development**





# Lower Manhattan Scale Comparison



# History and Transformation



**Pre 1800**  
**The Lenape**



**1800-1966**  
**U.S. Army Base**



**1966-96**  
**U.S. Coast Guard Base**



**2001**  
**National Monument**



**2003**  
**Island Sold for \$1**



**2005**  
**First Visitors**



**2010**  
**City Control**



**2013**  
**Historic District**  
**Rezoned**



# 2010: Master Plan Release

**New York City took full ownership of 150 acres.**

### Master Plan:

- International Design Competition
- North and South Island way finding
- 43 acres of resilient new park, promenade and open space
- 33 acres dedicated for future development on South Island
- Every aspect of park designed with climate resilience in mind





# A Decade of Progress



## Over \$400M of Investment

43-acres of new park space,  
infrastructure improvements  
& expanded transportation



## Educational & Cultural Partners

Year-round tenants, including  
the Harbor School, LMCC  
& dozens of cultural partners

*Above: Climate Museum*



## Destination Appeal

An expanded six-month season  
with a rapidly growing audience  
— nearly 1M annual visitors in 2019



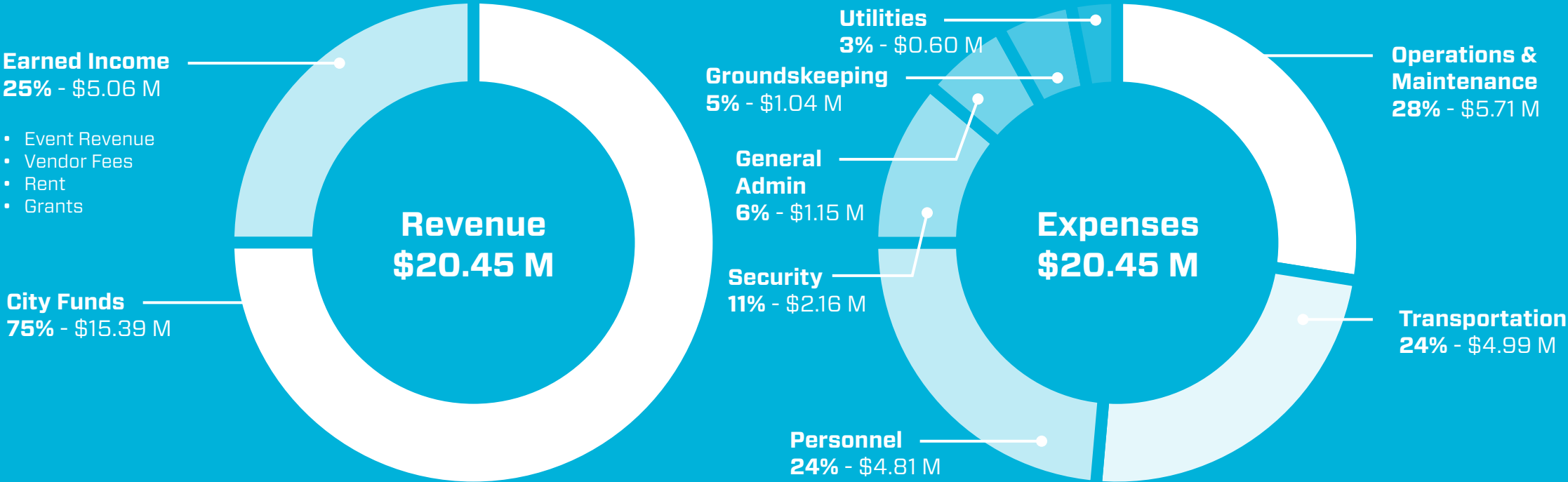
# Today, Governors Island is One of NYC's Most Dynamic Public Places



Left: Slide Hill  
Top: Outdoor Films on Governors Island in Partnership with Film at Lincoln Center, Hammock Grove  
Bottom: Biking along the Play Lawns, Japan Performing Arts' Bon Odori Festival on Outlook Hill



Governors Island is more than a park. Our mission is to responsibly steward it towards financial self-sufficiency.



*\*Representative of typical budget year*



# Our Vision for the Island's Next Phase of Growth

# Our Vision is to Celebrate the Island's Unique Attributes & Make a Lasting Contribution to NYC



Make Governors Island a **dynamic and accessible public place year-round**, with the same vibrancy in the winter as the summer



**Creates path towards financial sustainability** through responsible partnerships with like-minded organizations and institutions



Celebrates and utilizes Governors Island's **unique environment and waterfront location** as a public living laboratory

*Above: Billion Oyster Project*



Promote a **diversity of uses** that complement and enhance Governors Island's unique character



**Expands opportunities** for public participation and engagement

*Above: LMCC's Take Care Series*



**Maintains access and affordability** for all New Yorkers

*Above: NYC Holi Hai*



# Our Vision for Growth and Development Focuses on Three Key Strategies



**Open Space & Recreation**



**Arts & Culture**



**Expanded Use**

The next phase of the Island's transformation is centered on plans to **establish a leading center for climate solutions.**

This new center will pair interdisciplinary research focused on developing, testing, and scaling new tools for climate solutions with **meaningful public engagement through diverse educational and cultural experiences.**



**The Trust kicked off a research engagement last Fall to assess the climate adaptation field and interviewed over 40 experts. Different voices shared common themes.**

## Need to be cross-disciplinary within academia.

Everything about **climate research is multidisciplinary** - we have 200 affiliated academic staff from areas across the university - science, technology, business and public health ...

Leverage NYC's position as a global capital – train students who are **“bilingual” in both** the science of climate change and adaptation and necessary **economics and financing**.

## Need for a public showcase point.

We as a country **need to get climate adaptation on the map and in the public conscience**. This climate initiative on Governors Island can help to **empower communities to adapt to the changes they are already experiencing**.

Governors Island presents an **opportunity to focus on the threats to cities** posed by climate change and **the impact climate change has on communities**.

## Need for a center of gravity.

Governors Island provides a locus in a global city that would **attract talent from around the world** to work together to address climate mitigation and adaptation.

Governors Island could serve as **the physical hub of an existing and growing global network** of centers focused on climate change, mitigation and adaptation.

## Need to build a pipeline of talent & technology.

While it is lucrative to attract 'big-name' scientists, it is also important to draw and engage **a healthy mix of younger and hungrier researchers** in order to **create a more dynamic culture**.

We need to be able to identify **commercial opportunities** related to the adaptation and resilience fields - transportation, carbon capture and storage, conservation of natural systems.

## Need for focus on adaptation in addition to mitigation.

We need to **think creatively about climate adaptation in an urban context** - New York City is unique in that it is exposed to multiple components of the environmental and social crises brought on by climate change.

**Biggest gap in climate research is on the adaptation side** – burden will be on municipal governments and entities with large infrastructure assets.

# OUR VISION

**An academic anchor and new uses related to climate solutions will complement and enhance other cultural, non-profit and commercial tenancies.**

## Research & Education



## Dormitory & Faculty Housing



## Convening & Hospitality



## Commercial Operations & Innovation



## Living Lab & Cultural Destination





# Research & Education

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**Create a Visible Institutional Home for the Emerging Climate Field**

**Combine a Broad Range of Climate Related Disciplines Under a Single Program or Research Institute**

**Advance Both Pedagogical & Applied Climate Solutions**

**Potential Models:**



**Degree-Granting School Within a University**



**University Research or Innovation Center**



**Independent Not For Profit Research Institute**

# Living-Lab & Cultural Destination

Showcase Prototype  
Solutions to a Global  
Public Audience

Elevate Climate  
Innovations as  
World-Class  
Cultural Attraction

Invite Conversations  
and Climate Action  
Through Public Art and  
Programming

## Inspirational Examples:



Eden Project

Cornwall, UK  
Research &  
Education Center



Climate Museum

New York, NY  
Community Engagement  
and Education Center



Project Row Houses

Houston, TX  
Cultural  
Community



Biosphere 2

Oracle, AZ  
Earth System Science  
Research Facility



# Governors Island offers an unprecedented opportunity to support a new center for climate solutions in NYC

**Unparalleled Location & One-of-a-kind Canvas**

**Environmental Partners & Action in Place**

**Diverse & Flexible Development Opportunity**

**Close to the City with Room to Experiment**

**Year-Round & Uniquely Engaged Audience**

# A Climate Center on Governors Island Supports the City's Efforts in:

## Economic Recovery

### Job Creation & Economic Impact

Project would create 8K jobs and an estimated \$1 billion of fiscal impact for the City, all on Governors Island alone

### Economic Diversification

Project can power City's post-COVID diversification into green industries

### Education & Equity

Project would create meaningful educational pathways into climate field

### Inspiration

Project would create the space to re-imagine our urban fabric

## Resiliency Strategy\*

### Mitigating Risks

Governors Island could serve as a living lab for the City by testing and demonstrating resilient infrastructure systems and innovative solutions for the built environment

### Empowering Residents & Businesses

Governors Island could serve as a platform for public engagement, education and advocacy, showcasing solutions and giving New Yorkers tools to take back to their communities

### Building a Climate-Ready Government

Governors Island could serve as a central convening space for policy discussions and cross-silo collaboration

### Advancing & Applying Climate Science

Governors Island could provide the space for research and development for strategies to support the City's efforts

*\*MOR's four strategy pillars*



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# How We Get There



# Existing zoning

## North Island zoning allows for:

- Office
- Education
- Cultural
- Retail
- Restaurants
- Gyms & Health Clubs
- Hotel & Convening
- Amusements
- Maritime Recreation
- Dorm & Faculty Housing

## South Island legacy R3-2 zoning currently allows for low-density residential only



-  **NORTH ISLAND**  
REZONED IN 2013
-  **SOUTH ISLAND**  
LEGACY R3-2 ZONING

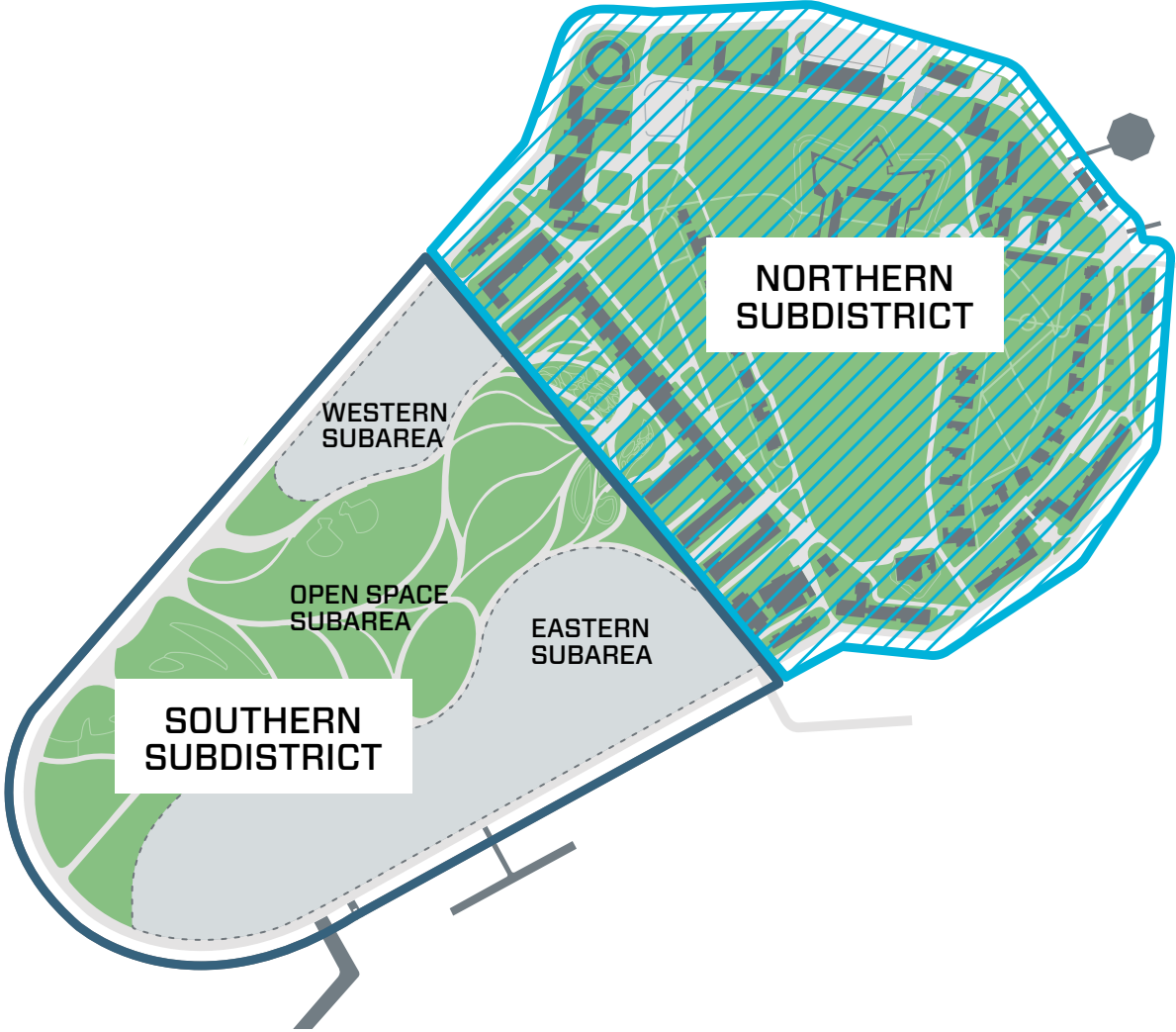


# New proposed Special District on South Island

The new Special District zoning will extend allowable uses from the North Island and allow additional uses to create a mid-density commercial district

Proposed South Island Special District would allow for a max of 4.275M ZSF across development sites, creating an effective 2.98 FAR based on the area of the development zones only

New zoning will restrict all non-park related development to within the Western and Eastern Subareas



-  **NORTH ISLAND SPECIAL DISTRICT**  
REZONED IN 2013  
*NO CHANGES PROPOSED*
-  **PROPOSED SOUTH ISLAND SPECIAL DISTRICT**

# Cornell Tech Campus Scale Comparison





Public engagement to date and work with DCP has informed guiding principles for future development:

Complement and enhance the park and public spaces and respond to environmental conditions.

Connect and establish a harmonious relationship with the park, esplanade and Historic District.

Retain and frame views within the Island, and towards New York Harbor, Lower Manhattan and the Brooklyn waterfront.

Activate building edges along public spaces.

Promote innovative design approaches to achieve a high level of resiliency and environmental sustainability.

Encourage flexibility to accommodate a wide range of building types and a mix of uses.

# Protect and expand public open space

**Under the new zoning framework, uses in the central open space are restricted to park-related uses and amenities**



 EXISTING SOUTH ISLAND  
OPEN SPACE



# Protect and expand public open space

The zoning creates at least 6 acres of new public open space including widened waterfront esplanades, new pedestrian paths and Yankee Pier Plaza

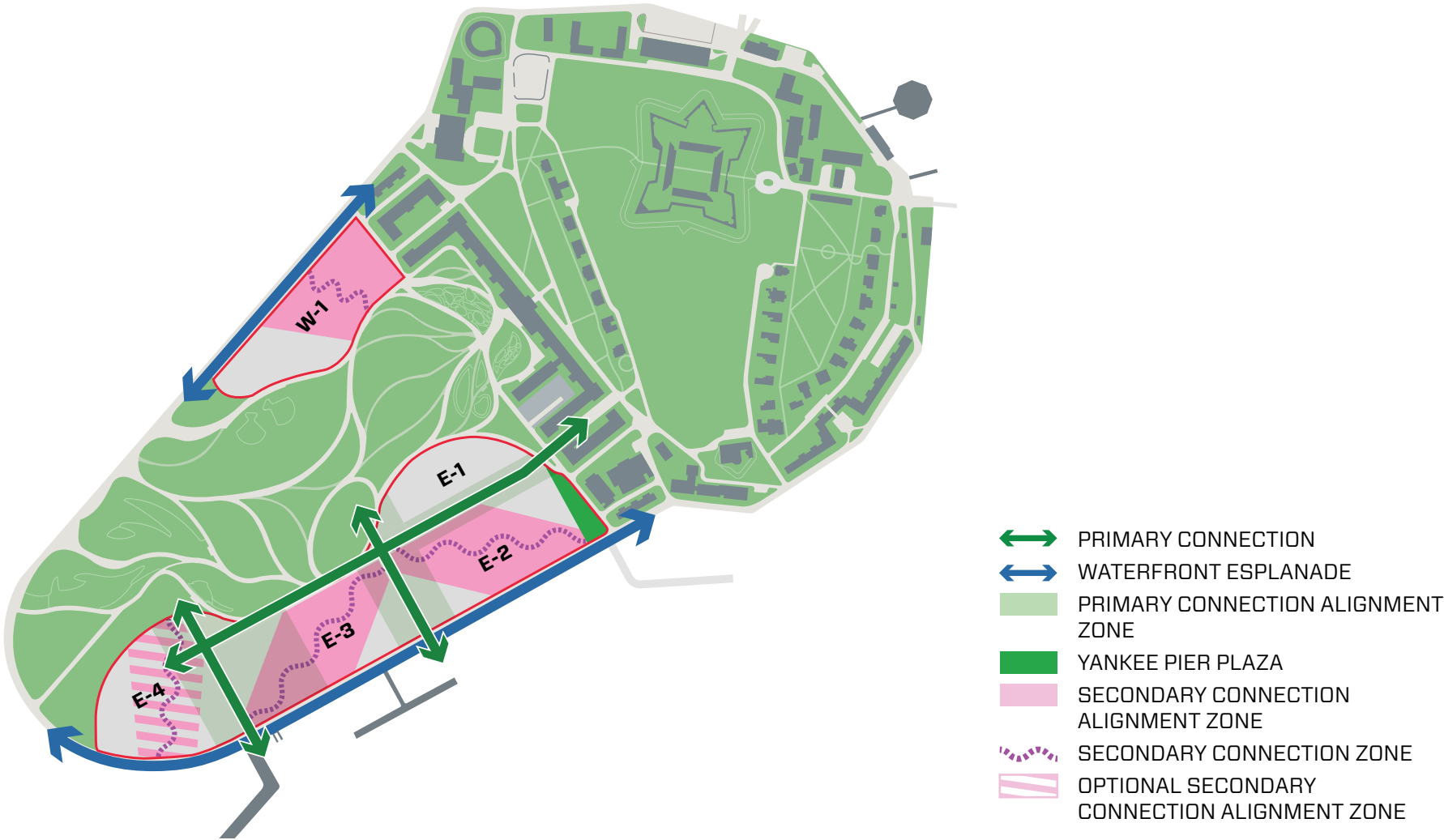


# Improve connectivity and ferry access

Establish a new network of primary and secondary pathways

Create new visual connections between the waterfront and the park

Further reactivation of Yankee Pier as a primary ferry terminal



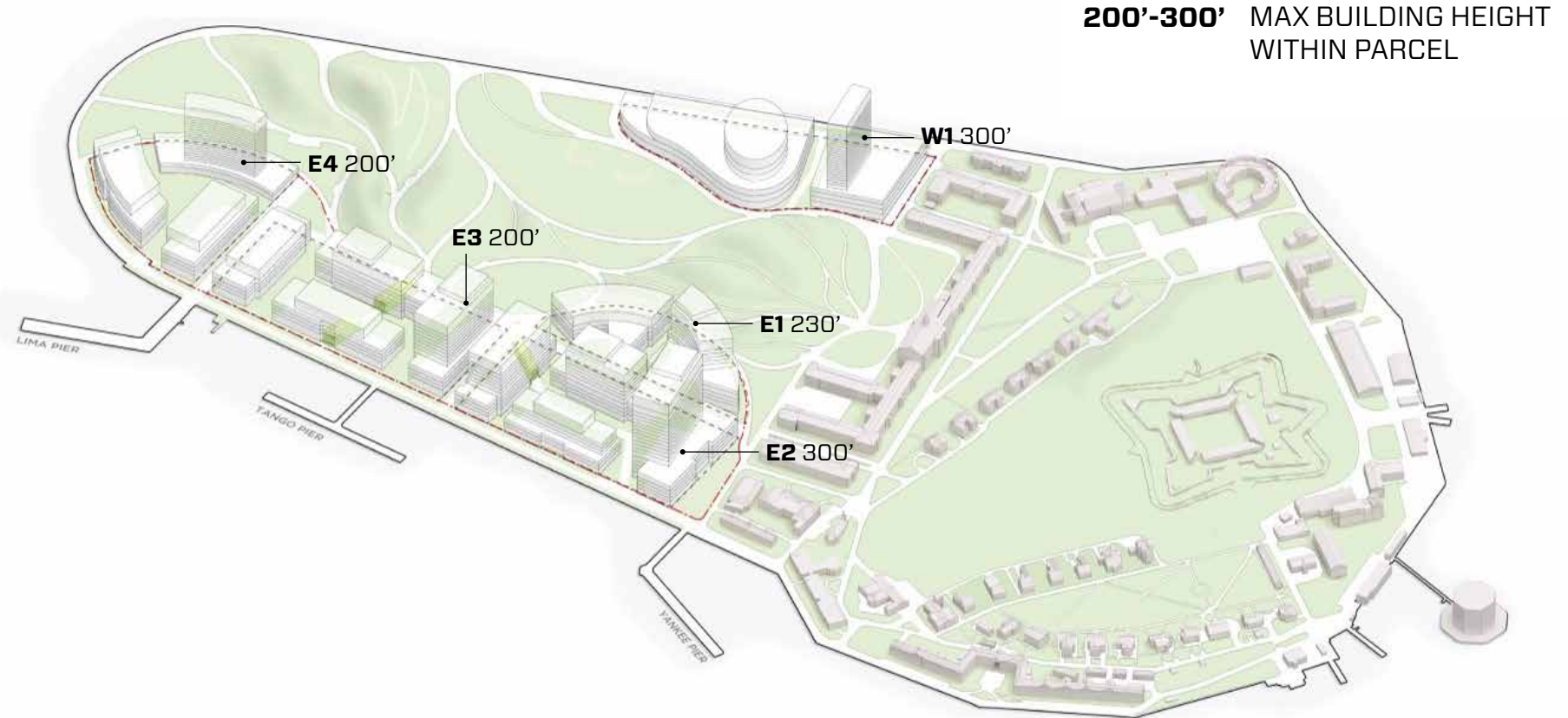


## Building envelope rules

**Proposed zoning rules allow for flexibility for a range of building typologies and uses while controlling for height and bulk**

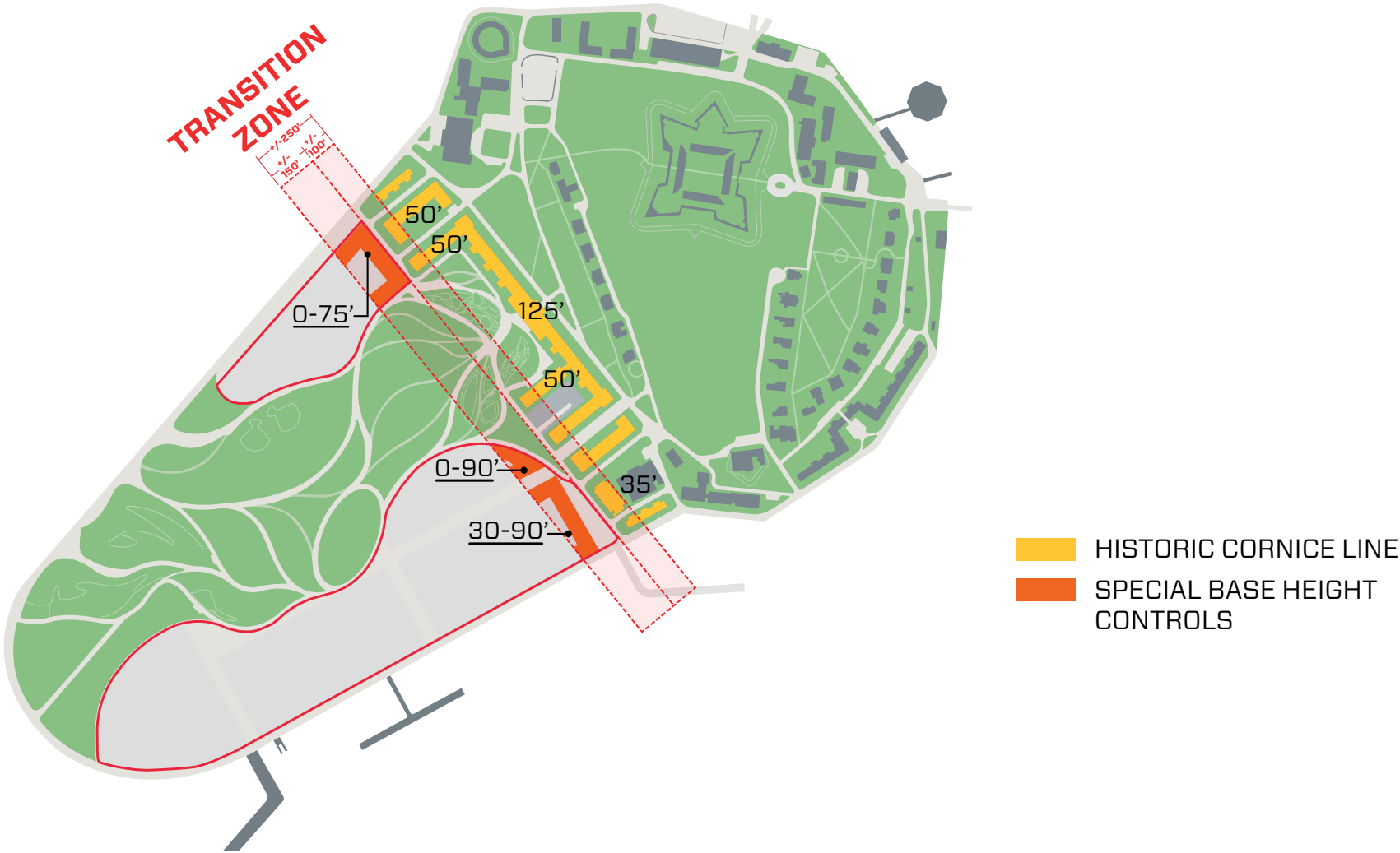
**Each of the five parcels has tailored rules for bulk and to maintain light, air and site lines:**

- **Maximum height:** 200'-300'
- **Maximum lot coverage:** Steps down from 80% at ground level to 30% for upper portions of buildings
- **Setbacks and building orientation rules:** Preserve skyline and waterfront views



*\*Above image is an illustrative example of one potential allowable massing and does not depict a design*

# Historic District transition





# Transportation

### Improvements to Support Expanded Use Include:

#### Accessibility

New passenger ferries to meet user needs; on-Island tram

#### Pier Infrastructure

Redevelop Yankee Pier for increased passenger ferry capacity

#### Freight

Invest in new freight improvements to support expanded operations and new construction



# Community Engagement

The Trust has led extensive outreach around the rezoning and climate vision with its stakeholders, elected officials, CAC and the general public beginning in 2018

Public engagement through #GovIsland365 signaled overwhelming support for year-round access and educational uses

We will work with our CAC, our elected officials and CB1 to provide extensive input, including on the future solicitation

CAC Members:

- 4heads

Association for a Better New York

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams

Billion Oyster Project

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

Brooklyn Community Board 2

Brooklyn Community Board 6

Center for an Urban Future

Councilmember Margaret Chin

The Climate Museum

Collective Retreats

Downtown Alliance

Earth Matter NY

The Friends of Governors Island

US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

GrowNYC

Harvestworks

Island Oyster

Senator Brian Kavanagh

Councilmember Brad Lander
- Landmarks Conservancy

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Manhattan Community Board 1

MoCADA

Congressman Jerrold Nadler

National Park Service

The Nature Conservancy

New Art Dealers Alliance

New Yorkers For Parks

New York City Audubon

Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou

Pioneer Works

play:ground NYC

Regional Plan Association

Shandaken Projects

Swale

Triangle Arts Association

Urban Assembly New York Harbor School

Waterfront Alliance

West Harlem Art Fund

Works on Water





# Climate Solutions Center Timeline:



# Feedback

Open Space	Height	Density	Historic Resources	Overnight Uses/ No Permanent Residential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zoning to create open space subarea, adding additional layer of protection to the park</li><li>• Proposal will create at least 6 additional acres of open space on South Island</li><li>• North Island open space unaffected</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capping building heights at predominately 200’ with 2 limited opportunities for heights of up to 300’</li><li>• Rules for setbacks and building orientation to preserve view corridors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed zoning limited to just under a 3 FAR across development sites (FAR cannot be used for development in the open space)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of a transition zone</li><li>• RFPs within Historic District for complementary uses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deed precludes permanent residential uses</li><li>• Hotel, dormitory, faculty housing short-term residencies and caretaker housing allowed by deed</li></ul>



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# Thank you!