

6th STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

Permaculture Site Design | Analysis & Assessment REPORT

Summary

Based on the research below, these areas stand out as being the most important in relation to the needs of the community, the site, and the City:

Cultural History of Loisaida Community

The history of the Lower East Side/East Village's independent/survivalist spirit can be seen in the early 20th century tenement labor movements, the gardening/homesteading movements of the 1970's, and the current local food movement. A desire for connection to the community's past struggles and victories is evident among many community leaders and residents. With "gentrification" in recent decades and the influx of college students and upper, middle-class families, this connection to the community may be becoming diluted and/or compartmentalized among different economic, social, and ethnic groups.

Community Influences / Relationships

The neighboring local organizations influence or could influence the 6th Street Community Center site and programs and visa versa. Specific relationships, such as those with El Jardin Community Garden, CSA Farms, Yoga Studio, and the Earth School, could factor prominently.

Site Use / Access and Circulation (Current)

The site functions primarily as a CSA Pickup location, a Café (one to three nights a week), offices for Community Center leaders, a 3rd floor Yoga studio, and a space for community programs and private events.

- Primary Circulation: Front entrance to first floor Café, Bathrooms, Event Space
- Secondary Circulation: Front entrance to 3rd floor Yoga Studio and 2nd floor offices
- Tertiary Circulation: Front entrance to basement, side entrance to roof or second floor to roof
- Frequency: The majority of foot traffic occurs on the first floor on evenings and weekends.

Landscape / Hydrology / Drainage

Historic geological research shows that this site and surrounding neighborhood was a tidal creek and salt marsh. Much of area east of Avenue C was built up from landfill from WWII rubble. Additionally, there is evidence of a large aquifer under the site. These factors could affect the sites' drainage issues, watershed, and wastewater concerns, since the site uses three sump pumps to continuously pump water out of the basement.

Polluting Influences

Combined Sewer Outfalls appear all along the East River, as well as other nearby locations in the Newtown Creek Sewageshed. The nearest Con Ed power plant releases 5,422,964.79 pounds of toxic emissions annually. The community sewage treatment plant is the Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Facility, directly across the East River.

Microclimates

A useful microclimate for growing food may exist on the lower roof, where the upper roof provides some solar radiation directly below. A cool, sheltered microclimate may exist along the narrow side yard, where two buildings provide shelter from wind and sun. The interior of the building is predominately dark and has little direct sunlight. This microclimate provides a cool space in the summer, when site use is at its peak.

Broad Scale Research

1. Landscape

a. Hydrology:

- Lower Hudson River Watershed & Bronx River Watershed
- Possible Aquifer under site
- Former Tidal Creek/Salt Marsh (according to Manhatta 1609 research)

b. Surface Geology

- Made land

What is now the East Village once ended at the East River where Avenue C is now located. A large portion of the neighborhood was formed by landfill.

c. Soils (historically)

- Ipswich

2. Climate

a. Hardiness Zone: 6B

b. Annual Rainfall: 40-44 inches

a. Time Zone: Eastern

b. Sunrise & Sunset

- April 22: 6:07am | 7:41pm
- July 22: 5:42am | 8:22pm
- October 22: 7:14am | 6:06pm
- January 22: 7:14am | 5:00pm

3. Polluting Influences

a. Power Plant

- Nearest: East River Generating Station, 701-827 E. 14th Street
Total yearly toxic emissions: 5,422,964.79 pounds.
Primary Fuel Type: Distillate Fuel Oils and Natural Gas

b. Brownfields

- Nearest Known: E 11th - E 13th St & Ave C - New York, NY, 10029.
Location of a former manufactured gas plant, MGP. Currently occupied by Jacob Riis Houses (NYCHA).

c. Sewage Treatment Plants

- Newtown Creek Sewageshed
- Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Facility , 329-69 Greenpoint Ave., Brooklyn, NY

- d. Combined Sewer Outfalls
 - Nearest Combined Sewer Outfall NC-014, Kent Ave, Brooklyn, NY and NC-083, Metropolitan Ave, Brooklyn, NY
 - Both NC-083 and NC-014 flow into the Newtown Creek.
 - Oasis Maps shows CSO's all along East River.
4. Green Space
- a. Tompkins Square Park: Avenue B & E 7th St New York, NY 10009
 - b. Lower East Side Ecology Center Community Garden: East 7th Street, between Avenues B and C [leseecologycenter.org]
 - c. 6BC Community Garden: East 6th Street between B and C
 - d. El Jardin de Paraiso: East 5th between C and D

Site Scale Research

1. Property Info
 - a. 638 East 6th Street, NYC 10009
 - b. Public Facility / Institution
 - c. Owner: CITY OF NEW YORK
 - d. Block: 387 Lot: 128
2. Property Characteristics
 - a. Lot Area: 2,037 sq ft (21' x 97')
 - b. # of Buildings: 1
 - c. Year built: 1900 (estimate)
 - d. # of floors: 3
 - e. Building Area: 4,817 sq ft
 - f. Total Units: 1 Residential Units: 0
 - g. Zoning: R8B Commercial
3. Landform
 - a. Location: N 40°43.419' W 73°58.815'
 - b. Elevation: 15-23 feet above sea level
 - c. Drainage Lines:
 - Roof: rainwater drains from north side of roof to southeast corner of building, down a drainpipe.
 - Side Yard: rainwater drains from neighboring NYHA building roof into side yard.
 - d. Views:
 - Roof: nearly 360 degree views. Westerly views are obstructed by Lower East Side Services Building, which is slightly taller.
 - Front: Street View

- Back: Window views to back area, fire escape stairs, and NYHA Building Court Yard.
 - East Side: Window view of neighboring NYHA building and woodchip/dirt piles.
- e. Neighboring buildings:
- NYC Housing Authority: 640 East 6th Street
 - Church of God: 636 East 6th Street
4. Climate & Microclimates
- a. Wind
- Back/Side yard: Open area adjacent to building on the south and east side of site may increase wind through side yard. Some trees in neighboring NYHA courtyard may reduce wind force somewhat.
 - Roof: Wind could be quite strong here, since there is little wind shelter, except for Lower East Side Services Building to the East.
- a. Shade & Solar Path
- Roof: Sun study shows full sun for most of the day. Some shading at 4pm from building to the west.
 - East Side Yard: Full sun for a few midday hours, but for most of the day the narrow side yard is shaded by CC building and the NYHA building to the East.
 - South Back Yard: 3 season sun from morning till midafternoon. Western buildings shade back yard after 4pm.
- b. Thermal Mass and Insulation
- Roof: Painted silver reflects heat. Neighboring building to West might provide some insulation(?) Upper roof provides some insulation and radiation for lower roof from North. Currently nothing on the roof to hold and store energy.
 - Side/Back Yard: Trees in neighboring NYHA courtyard might provide some thermal mass. CC and NYHA building and concrete walkways provide thermal mass.
5. Taxonomy
- a. Flora
- Street trees: Honey Locust
 - NYHA Courtyard Trees: Honey Locust
- b. Fauna
- Birds: pigeons, sparrows, robins
 - Insects: mosquitoes, houseflies, fruitflies, cockroaches, butterflies, bees hives on roof
 - Mammals: squirrels, rats, mice
6. Site Use (Current)
- a. Uses
- CSA Pickup location

- Café (one to three nights a week)
- Offices for Community Center leaders
- 3rd floor Yoga studio
- A space for community programs, such as “Seeds To Supper” and “SOS Food Program”, and rental for private events.

b. Zones

- Zone 1: Entrance area, Bathrooms, and Café (including Kitchen)
- Zone 2: Event Space
- Zone 3: Yoga Studio and Offices
- Zone 4: Back/side yard
- Zone 5: Rooftop and El Jardin

c. Access and Circulation

- Frequency of Pedestrian Traffic (from nearby residential locations):
 - CSA pickup on sidewalk: 35 Winter Share members pickup on Tuesday 6-9pm
140 Summer Share members pickup on Tuesday 5-9pm
 - Community Center Yoga classes on Wednesdays in Community Room.
 - Organic Soul Café: Tuesday evenings, additional evenings in Summer/Fall
 - Finding Sukha Yoga 3rd Floor: Currently on Sat 10am and 4pm. Tues-Friday 6:30-9:30. Other times vary.
- Pedestrian Movement (on-site):
 - Primary: Front entrance to first floor Cafe, Bathrooms, Event Space
 - Secondary: Front entrance to 3rd floor Yoga Studio and 2nd floor offices
 - Tertiary: Front entrance to basement, side entrance to roof or second floor to roof
- Vehicular traffic (in front of site)
 - Flows from West to East to East River Park
 - Lightest on Saturday and Sunday mornings
 - Heaviest on Weekdays 3pm (school) 5pm (work)
- Pedestrian traffic (in front of site)
 - Constant, regular foot traffic
 - Heaviest on Weekdays 3pm (school) 5pm (work)

5. Community Influences / Relationships

a. 6th Street Community Center Programs

- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
 - The Center organizes a CSA for local community members.
 - Full Vegetable Share ranges from \$670-\$405 (depending on income)

- Half Vegetable Share ranges from \$430-\$240 (depending on income)
 - Fruit Share is \$290
 - Each CSA member is required to sign up for Committee Involvement, such as Site Management, Compost, Events, Café, Newsletter, Donations.
- Seeds to Supper Program
 - This six-week summer program (currently on hold) provides stipends to teens 15-18 years old for participation in education and work experience at Catalpa Ridge Farm in NJ and La Plaza Cultural Community Garden. In addition, the Program includes seminars with community activists, restaurant owners and farmers.
- SOS Food
 - Food safety awareness campaigns to pressure local supermarkets to ban or label genetically engineered foods and inform the community and public schools about the benefits of organic and locally grown foods.
- Organic Soul Café
 - On one to three nights a week the Center hosts a Community Café dinner, using organic, local and CSA produce, dairy, and fish.
 - Café utilizes a full, commercial (?) kitchen for food production, including several refrigerators in the basement.
- b. Community Gardens:
- El Jardin de Paraiso: East 5th between C and D. [evpcnyc.org/index2.html]
Director and garden leaders would like to partner for compost pickup and utilization.
 - 6BC Community Garden: East 6th Street between B and C. [6bc.org]
Closest garden, but no current partnerships?
- c. Schools
- Public School 364, 600 East 6th Street [theearthschool.org].
 - This school shares goals and interests with CC and is on the same block. "The Earth School's educational program is designed to support children's academic achievement and to encourage their commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict and the preservation of the Earth's resources."
 - Schools Natural Cooking & Nutrition program "strives to cultivate an understanding of the benefits of exercise, healthy food choices and nutritional awareness"
 - Current relationship includes possibility of Community Center teens maintaining new Rooftop Farm.

- P.S. 15 Roberto Clemente School, 333 East 4th Street.
[schools.nycenet.edu/Region9/ps15]
 - This Pre-K through 6th Grade school is on the same block as El Jardin.
 - No active relationships with this school.
 - According to Director many of the Community Center youth members/participants attend:
 - East Side Community High School, 420 East 12th Street, New York, NY 10009
 - Essex Street Academy, 350 Grand Street, New York, NY 10002
 - PS 110, 285 Delancey Street, New York, NY 10002-3664
- d. NYC Housing Authority
- Numerous NYCHA buildings in this neighborhood.
 - Not sure if there are currently any relationships with these buildings or residents.
- e. Finding Suhka Yoga
- Located on the 3rd floor, this new studio is finding its feet with an evolving schedule.
 - Studio offers tea for \$1. And standard yoga rates.
 - The Community Center also offers Yoga on Wednesday evenings.
 - Many Yoga studios offer a community yoga night to allow teachers in training to lead classes. Perhaps collaboration between the Center and Suhka could evolve and allow low-income members to become evolved.
- f. Environmental Stewardship Groups
- These groups cover or are located nearby CC site:
- El Jardin: [evpcnyc.org/index2.html]
Mission: "The goal of El Jardin is to be a model eco teaching sustainability and earth stewardship, and to provide a safe green space for the public to enjoy in the community."
 - Orchard Alley: [evpcnyc.org/orchard]
This park occupies the entire width of the block on a large open lot with the entrance on 4th St.
 - More Gardens!: [www.moregardens.org]
Mission: "The More Gardens! Coalition is a group of community people, gardeners, and environmental and social justice activists who promote the development and preservation of community gardens as well as the cultivation of fallow land in New York City."
 - Recycle-a-Bicycle: [recycleabicycle.org]
Mission: "Recycle-A-Bicycle is a not for profit environmental education and job training program for New York City youth. We take donated bicycles, repair them and reintroduce them to the community through earn-a-bike programs in schools."

- Manhattan Land Trust; [manhattanlandtrust.org]
Mission: "To preserve, improve, and promote community managed open spaces for the benefit of all."

g. Community / Council Districts

- NYC Council: District 2: Council Member - Rosie Mendez
- NYS Assembly: District 74: Assembly Member –Brian Kavanagh
- NYS Senate: District 25: Senator - Daniel Squadron

h. Cultural History of Loisaida Community

- During the 17th Century the area was just at the edge of the southern tip of Peter Stuyvesant's farm, in a salt marsh. In the centuries following, the area changed radically. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the area was comprised German, Jewish, Irish, and Italian working-class residents who lived in tenements, without running water. It was in complete decline in the 1970's when many buildings were abandoned and torn down.
- Loisaida is a term derived from the Latino (and especially Nuyorican) pronunciation of "Lower East Side". The term was originally coined by poet/activist, Bittman "Bimbo" Rivas in his 1974 poem "Loisaida". Loisaida Avenue is now an alternative name for Avenue C, whose population has largely been Hispanic (mainly Nuyorican) since the late 1960s with the construction of large government housing projects south and east.
- The population transformed in the late 1990s, when low rents outweighed high crime rates and large numbers of artists and students moved to the area.
- The interiors of the CC site contain original memorial plaques from the former synagogue, which have names in Yiddish, Hebrew and English and are integrated with recent murals commemorating the neighborhood's labor history and resilient spirit, such as famous labor activists, Emma Goldman (anarchist and social critic) and Clara Lemlich (teen-age leader of the 1909 Strike of 20,000)
- There is also a mural whose caption reads "this neighborhood ain't ready to give up the ghost" a reference to the Lower East Side being reclaimed through gardening, homesteading, squatting and other organizing efforts.

6. Community Population Characteristics (based on 2000 U.S. Census Bureau)

a. Youth Population under 18:

- 20-30% of the block and 3 blocks south and north/east to Avenue D
- 30-40% in the NYCHA housing projects along the FDR Drive

b. Communities of "Color":

- 80-97% of the block and 3 blocks south
- 60-80% East to Avenue D and North to 14th Street

- 97-100% in the NYCHA housing projects between Avenue D the FDR Drive
- c. Median Household Income
 - 25-45K this block and 3+ blocks south & north, 2 blocks west to 1st Ave and 1 block east to Avenue D
 - >25K in the NYCHA housing projects between Avenue D the FDR Drive
- d. Linguistic Isolation
 - Approx. 8-18% of households in this block and 3+ blocks south & north, 2 blocks west to 1st Ave and 1 block east to Avenue D, have a majority of adults who speak a non-English language and also have difficulty with English.
 - 18-28% of households in the NYCHA housing projects between Avenue D the FDR Drive, have a majority of adults who speak a non-English language and also have difficulty with English.