EMINENT DOMAIN IN BROOKLYN
PROJECT PACKET

Name: __________________________________________

Adaptation

*Amanda Burden is the chair of the New York City Planning Commission and director of the Department of City Planning. This essay was adapted from remarks presented at a forum entitled "Jane Jacobs vs. Robert Moses: How Stands the Debate Today?" presented by the Gotham Center of History at the City University of New York Graduate Center.*

The opposing visions of Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses towards city building *resonate* with many New Yorkers today. It is certainly clear to me that Jane Jacobs is now the prevailing force. While no one person changed the physical landscape of New York as much as Robert Moses, Jane Jacobs' legacy and her influence is much more deeply rooted and felt widely by city urbanists, planners and elected officials.

That legacy embraces:

- the importance of the relationship of people and the public realm
- the appreciation of networks created by diverse uses
- understanding that blocks are the basic unit of the city
- the *primacy* of the street as the glue of neighborhood life

Moses may have gotten a lot done, built a great deal in the name of “the people,” but the truth is that he wanted little to do with the people who would live in the city he created. Their voices were dispensable, their homes were dispensable. And that is why he couldn’t conceive of the importance of neighborhoods.

Jacobs, on the other hand, knew that if you neglect neighborhoods, you do so at the city’s peril. People who no longer have faith in the future of the place in which they were brought up or where they are raising a family, will, if they can afford it, leave for a more predictable, safer place.

So understanding and appreciating the integral character of diverse neighborhoods has to be a primary requirement for any planning initiative. The goal of city planners, or how we are looking at the city’s challenges today, is no longer the broad brush, the bold strokes, the big plan.

Make no mistake about it, we have an enormous need to build thousands of units of affordable housing; we must create a broad spectrum of jobs for a rapidly expanding population; we need to reclaim and *revitalize* our waterfront; and we must lay the foundations to support the growth that is to come and that we welcome. But it is just not acceptable, or wise, or even possible to undertake these challenges without *espousing* Jacobs principles of city diversity, of the rich detail of urban life, to build in a way that nourishes complexity.

Jacobs gave community activists the confidence that they indeed can make a difference and prevail. She inspired individuals to join community boards and advocacy organizations, to speak out at public hearings, and to lobby their elected officials. Planning has changed because of Jane Jacobs. Robert Moses’ centralized planning is a thing of the past.

Planning today is noisy, combative, *iterative* and reliant on community involvement. Any initiative that does not build *consensus* -- that is not shaped by the give-and-take of the public review process -- will be an inferior plan and, deservedly, will be voted down by the City Council, and die.
Where we do, or some of us might, have nostalgia for Moses is in the realization that it is very difficult to get very complex and expensive projects built that are critical to our city’s future such as the Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access, a one seat ride to the airport from Lower Manhattan and the #7 line.

With the limitation of a two-term mayoralty, it is an enormous challenge to get great new open spaces such as Fresh Kills, the East River Waterfront in Lower Manhattan, the High Line and the Greenpoint Williamsburg waterfront approved, designed and built so that the initiative cannot be undone by subsequent administrations.

These are great projects that need the kind of sustained, focused leadership and a guaranteed funding stream that Robert Moses was so ingenious -- indeed diabolical -- in securing.

Big cities need big projects. Big projects are a necessary part of the diversity, competition and growth that both Jacobs and Moses fought for. But today’s big projects must have a human scale; must be designed, from idea to construction, to fit into the city. Projects may fail to live up to Jane Jacobs’ standards, but they are still judged by her rules.

It is to the great credit of the mayor that we are building and rezoning today, once again, like Moses, on an unprecedented scale, but, with Jacobs firmly in mind, invigorated by the belief that the process matters and that great things can be built through a focus on the details, on the street, for the people who live in this great city.
"What Brooklyn Needs."

Brooklyn Daily Eagle 14 April, 1938:

4. Print.

What Brooklyn Needs

A 10-point goal for the development of Brooklyn prosperity.

Fulton St. L removal.
Completion of circumferential highway.
Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel.
Development of Marine Park.
Atlantic Ave. improvement.
Crosstown Highway to the World’s Fair.
Additional high schools and branch libraries.
Rehabilitation of older sections.
Bay Ridge-Jersey railroad freight tunnel,
Narrows-Staten Island vehicular tunnel.

Only
381
Days Till
Opening of
WORLD’S
FAIR
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is DOCUMENT 1 a primary or secondary source? Why?

2. According to The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, what are three things that Brooklyn needs?

3. Why might constructing tunnels and highways be helpful to Brooklyn’s economic prosperity?

4. The 1939 World’s Fair was held in Queens to help stimulate New York City’s economy and lift it out of the Great Depression. Many different countries were represented, each debuting new technologies, ideas, and products of the future. How is this relevant to the “10-point” plan for Brooklyn’s infrastructure?
When Mr. Moses's plans for altering Battery Park, made necessary by proposed construction of the Brooklyn-Battery vehicular tunnel, were announced about two years ago, they were opposed by some who wished to preserve the original Fort Clinton, later known as Castle Garden, most recently as the Aquarium.

Mr. Wetter, who is treasurer of the Greenwich Village Historical Society and an old opponent of Mr. Moses, began the litigation by asking the Supreme Court to enjoin the Commissioner from closing the Aquarium to the public during construction work in the park. Justice Louis A. Valente denied the injunction on Nov. 17, 1941. The Board of Estimate gave Mr. Moses approval to tear down the Aquarium last July.

Sought Injunction on Aug. 20

Supported by the Fine Arts Federation, the Regional Plan Association, and several individuals, Mr. Wetter sued in Supreme Court last Aug. 20 for an injunction against demolition of the "historic" building, charging the Commissioner had "fraudulently" represented his plan. Protesting this attack as "reckless," "defamatory," "malicious" and "libelous," Mr. Moses retorted that Mr. Wetter had once served five years in a Federal prison. Mr. Wetter's reply was that he had been imprisoned during the World War for his then political ideals and afterward received a Presidential pardon.
Transcript

MOSES WINS FIGHT TO RAZE AQUARIUM

Court of Appeals Has Denied Injunction Sought by Civic Groups Opposing Him

ACTION WAS BEGUN IN 1941

Contest Was Marked by Fierce Exchange Between Park Chief and Pierce T. Wetter

Park Commissioner Robert Moses has finally won his long fight to raze the old Aquarium building as part of Battery Park, it appeared yesterday with his announcement that the State Court of Appeals had denied an injunction against him. Mr. Moses’s contest with Pierce Trowbridge Wetter, leader of civic groups opposing demolition of the structure, began in the Fall of 1941 and was marked by fierce personal exchanges between the two men.

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In any case, the metal roof and interior fittings of the Aquarium were removed last Fall for salvage, yielding ten tons of scrap. The fish were mostly dumped into the bay. Justice Isidor Wasservogel dismissed the application for an injunction last Dec. 7 as without merit.

Mr. Wetter promptly appealed against this ruling to the Appellate Division, which sustained the lower court last Jan. 23. The last appeal to the Court of Appeals followed, the high court granting Mr. Moses's motion to dismiss Mr. Wetter's plea last Thursday.

**Only Fort's Walls Remain**

All that remains of the disputed building are the circular stone walls of Fort Clinton. The Park Department has postponed tearing them down until after the war, when materials and labor will become available to progress with the tunnel and rehabilitation of Battery Park. In arguing against any “historic” value possessed by the Aquarium Building, Mr. Moses had declared Fort Clinton never fired a shot in the Revolutionary War or War of 1812, while, as Castle Garden, it had been merely P. T. Barnum’s theatre and an unsuitable immigrant receiving station. Repairs costing at least $200,000 would have been needed, he said, if the Aquarium were to be maintained.

After the war it is planned to erect a new Aquarium of the most modern design in Coney Island.

Mr. Wetter and Mr. Moses first clashed several years before over Mr. Moses’s proposed re-design of Washington Square. Mr. Wetter, who lives at 24 Washington Square North, frustrated those plans.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Robert Moses and what did he try to do?

2. Who was Pierce Wetter and what group(s) did he represent?

3. What did Robert Moses say of the Aquarium Building’s historic value?

4. When did Mr. Wetter and Mr. Moses first meet? What did they clash over?
DOCUMENT 3: Photograph. 1940. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think a tunnel was built connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan instead of another bridge?

2. Describe how the construction of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel might affect commuters living in southern Brooklyn.

3. Examine DOCUMENT 1 closely. What is missing that connects Brooklyn to Staten Island today?

4. Besides building highways, tunnels, or bridges, what are some other ways you can think of to reduce car traffic in the city?
The proposal by City Construction Coordinator Robert Moses to build the long-touted bridge between Brooklyn and Staten Island across the Narrows has special significance for motorists from Long Island who head for New Jersey beaches in the summer and for Southern vacation lands in the winter.

If the bridge proposal should be approved it probably will be some years before motorists can hope to use the short cut. Officials of the Throgs Neck Bridge and Tunnel Authority, which would build and operate the crossing, say that in its present stage there are no estimates available as to the cost, the amount of preliminary work required, and how long actual construction of the bridge would take.

The bridge, which would be built from the Fort Hamilton area in Brooklyn to Fort Wadsworth in Richmond, would provide the missing link in a direct highway connection between Long Island and the mainland to the South and the West. It would reduce the distance between those areas by nine to thirteen miles and enable motorists to avoid many congested city sectors.

The new bridge would also prove a benefit to Manhattan drivers. Motorists returning from New Jersey shore points at the end of summer weekends are often delayed by traffic jams on the Pulaski Skyway or the approaches to the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. These delays could be avoided by making use of the new bridge which would be reached by continuing along New Jersey highways to the Outerbridge Crossing and traversing Staten Island along the new highways now in the planning stage. Once across the Narrows Bridge motorists would continue along the Belt Parkway, go through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, which is now under construction, and then take either the East Side or West Side express highways to points in mid-town Manhattan.

Travelers coming from the South and West also would benefit from the new system. They could by-pass congested metropolitan sections en route to Long Island or even to New England points.
NARROWS BRIDGE

Staten Island Crossing Proposal Revived

The proposal by City Construction Coordinator Robert Moses to build the long-talked of bridge between Brooklyn and Staten Island across the Narrows has special significance for motorists from Long Island who head for New Jersey beaches in the summer and for Southern vacation lands in the winter.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why might residents of Long Island like to see a bridge built between Brooklyn and Staten Island?

2. Why would travelers going to Manhattan benefit from the Verrazano Bridge?

3. Based on the image, why do you think the area where the bridge was built is called “the narrows”?

4. According to the article, if the bridge was built, where would traffic ease?
BAY RIDGE SEETHES OVER BRIDGE PLAN

Housewife and Dentist Chafe Over Approval by City of Staten Island Span

7,500 TO BE UPROOTED

Most in Way of 7th Avenue Approach Uncertain on Where They Will Go

By GAY TALESE

Many merchants, housewives and even a mortician were seething in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, yesterday because the $320,000,000 Narrows Bridge has become more than a specter on Seventh Avenue.

On Tuesday, the Board of Estimate approved the bridge, which will mean demolition of about 800 homes and the displacement of about 7,500 residents.

From the barber shops to Bohack's conversations bristled with contempt. A man in a cigar store asked, “That bridge—who needs it?” A dentist wondered about new patients. A used-car dealer worried about a new lot. Mrs. Olga Kaidy, a housewife of Fort Hamilton Parkway, asked, “Where are we all going to live?”

Their problem, of course, is not the bridge to Staten Island itself; it is rather the approach to the bridge, an expressway along Seventh Avenue that will necessitate the destruction of all buildings in its path.

Bay Ridge residents long ago formed a “Save Bay Ridge” committee; but Tuesday’s development made the committee embittered, irate and talkative.

“We don’t need the bridge,” said J. Gerald Shea, the chairman, “it’s ridiculous. The construction of the approach to the bridge will henceforth be
known as ‘Wagner’s Seventh Avenue Folly,’ and the bridge will be known as ‘Abe Stark’s Cross-Brooklyn Ditchway.’”

**All to Be Affected**

Nearly everyone in Bay Ridge will be affected in one way or another by the Narrows Bridge. Msgr. Edward J. Sweeney of St. Ephrem’s Roman Catholic Church will lose about 2,000 members of his parish. Dr. Henry Amen will lose a dental office he recently remodeled at a cost of $15,000. Joseph V. Sessa, an undertaker, said he would lose about 2,500 families “from which to draw.”

Almost all of those owning homes slated for demolition seemed undecided where they would live next. A housewife complained that she did not wish to leave her older, more comfortable home for a newer house “made of cardboard.”

Louis Juliano, a builder and contractor, is fed up with moving. About four years ago, when a school was planned on his home’s site on Shore Road, he was forced to move; and now he again is forced to move.

Only Mr. and Mrs. John G. Herbert, of 6704 Seventh Avenue, do not seem concerned over their next abode. Which is odd. They have seventeen children, and all but two daughters live with them and a dog and cat in an eight-room house.

“I’m going to wait until the last minute before I move,” Mr. Herbert said. “I’m going to wait until they come with the city truck. I’m letting them worry about the details.”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How many homes needed to be destroyed to make room for the bridge construction? How many people will lose their homes?

2. Why were Bay Ridge residents upset about the bridge and the approach to building the bridge?

3. DOCUMENT 5 notes that most of the residents in Bay Ridge would be affected by the bridge. How will the merchants of Bay Ridge be affected by the bridge?

4. How would you feel if you had to move from your home because of construction?

“The new people,” they are called on Staten Island. Mainly from Brooklyn, they are the people who have settled on the island since the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge was opened, in 1964, touching off the area’s biggest boom since the Dutch moved in on the Leni-Lenape Indians in 1661.

The bridge has pushed this last rural outpost in the city well on the way to suburbia. And many islanders fear “another Queens” is in the making, with high-rise apartments and closely packed homes sprouting out of bulldozed woodland.

Another step in the citification of Staten Island will take place today when a six-lane second level of the largest suspension bridge in the world is opened—11 years ahead of schedule—adding fuel to the arguments over progress and serenity.

The lower level was included in the 13,700-foot bridge when it was built. But as traffic rose far beyond expectations, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority pushed up the opening date of the second level of the $320-million bridge when volume neared 28 million cars a year.

One industry created by the bridge is the assembly of statistics. They include: Staten Island’s population since the bridge opened Nov. 21, 1964, has increased by more than 60,000 to its present estimated total of 310,000, about double the increase between the census figures of 1950 and 1960.

About 80 per cent of the families own homes...

The non-white population is between 7 and 10 per cent.

Take 17-year-old Mark Meyers, stretched out on a beach chair on the front lawn on a block so new that the street signs were not even installed. Up the street, a few children were riding bicycles.

“It’s nice here,” he said. “Peaceful. Not like Brooklyn. I never lived in a house before. I like living in one. I can go downstairs in the den and play the drums.

“My only complaint is the bus system. You can wait 20 minutes and sometimes they break down. And there’s the mosquitoes. I don’t like them.

“But it’s swell here. I’ve had some of my friends over from Brooklyn. I think their parents are thinking of moving out here.”

Several feet away, in front of the next house, Mrs. Carol Curcuru gave a bottle to her 5-month-old daughter Kim and chatted contentedly with a neighbor, Mrs. Eileen Sandman. Both had come from Brooklyn, but had not met before they moved here.

“I wanted a home,” said Mrs. Curcuru. “And this is much better than suburbia.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who moved to Staten Island after the Verrazano Bridge was built? Why do you think they moved to Staten Island?

2. How long was the construction on the second level supposed to take? Why was the construction sped up?

3. What was the population of Staten Island in 1961? 1969? How many more people lived in Staten Island in 1969 compared to 1961?

4. What were Mark Meyer’s feelings toward Staten Island?
This photo shows a bird’s-eye view of the Meeker Avenue link with the Brooklyn Crosstown Highway, now known as the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.
Expressway. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) demolished 345 buildings in this neighborhood alone to make way for the new highway.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think the destruction of those 345 buildings affected the merchants along Meeker Avenue?

2. Write a paragraph describing what it would be like to live next to the demolition and construction. What are some things you might see, hear, feel, smell, etc. on a daily basis?

Caption: “Pattern In Light And Shadow – View under Meeker Ave. structure looks like this now, but concrete paving will black it all out later. Eventual use of wide strip directly under viaduct has not been decided. It may be used for parking, but probably will not be a roadway. Local traffic uses wide lanes at sides, as on 3d Ave. Steel work will be completed by Fall, and cars should be rolling by November, engineers estimate.”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Imagine that you are the city planner in charge of this project. What would you use the space underneath the expressway for? How could it best be used to benefit the surrounding community?

2. When does DOCUMENT 8 say that steel work will be completed?

3. When will cars start using the expressway?
Diehard Tenants Still Protest Relocation for Expressway.

EVictions Along Prospect Ave.

EXPressway Inches Ahead—View, taken from Gowanus Parkway, shows how far Prospect Ave. Expressway already has reached toward Ocean Parkway, from which point it will be accessible to a large section of central Brooklyn.

‘WHERE ARE WE TO GO?’—One of the families yet to be relocated from the site of the Prospect Expressway is the DePrisco family. Mrs. Angie DePrisco and her three children, Geraldine, 7, Joan, 5, and Ralph, 2, stand in front of their cold water flat at 336 17th St.
These are moving days for the people who live on the site of the Prospect Expressway. In order that work can begin immediately on the section from Ocean Parkway to Sixth Ave., the City has moved to evict the hard core of remaining tenants by Friday.

The Expressway, when completed, will link the Gowanus Parkway with Ocean Parkway, thus making the former more accessible to central Brooklyn. It will also help relieve congestion on the Gowanus Parkway, long the site of the borough's biggest traffic bottlenecks.

Part and parcel of almost every major public works project in a built-up area like Brooklyn, is the problem of relocating tenants. The Prospect Expressway presents no exception.

A survey of the area by the Brooklyn Eagle yesterday showed that approximately 95 percent of the people who lived on the route had already moved out, but that the remaining five percent were still pondering their future.

“Where are we to go?” they ask.
Most of them have lived in their houses for many years, long before inflation sent rents skyrocketing. Their average rent is well under $50 a month.

Mistreatment Charged
They claim the Reclamation Office has been sending them to houses and neighborhoods that were “not fit to live in” and, adding insult to injury, offering them apartments at much higher rents.

Mrs. Angie DePrisco has been living in a three-room cold water flat at 336 17th St. with her husband, an unemployed truck driver, and three children. She is paying $18 a month for rent.

“I would have been out of here by Sept. 1,” she said. “They gave me four beautiful rooms on 41st St. but when the landlord found out I had three small children they took it away.”

Robert White of 379 18th St. had an even bigger problem. He had to find an apartment which would comfortably house his 11 children, but luckily he solved it.

He said he had rented a 5-room apartment for $70 a month and ruefully compared it to the seven-room house at $32 he has to abandon.

“I’ll even have to throw out half of my furniture,” he observed.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When completed, what will the Prospect Expressway link together?

2. What percentage of the neighborhood still needs to relocate? Why haven't they left yet?

3. What are some of the problems people are experiencing with the Reclamation Office?

4. Using the figures given in DOCUMENT 9, what was the range in rent costs in that area of Brooklyn at the time?
Robert Moses, who played a larger role in shaping the physical environment of New York State than any other figure in the 20th century, died early yesterday at West Islip, L.I. Mr. Moses, whose long list of public offices only begins to hint at his impact on both the city and state of New York, was 92 years old.

A spokesman for Good Samaritan Hospital said he had been taken there Tuesday afternoon from his summer home in Gilgo Beach. The cause of death was given as heart failure.

"Those who can, build," Mr. Moses once said. "Those who can't, criticize."

Robert Moses was, in every sense of the word, New York's master builder. Neither an architect, a planner, a lawyer nor even, in the strictest sense, a politician, he changed the face of the state more than anyone who was. Before him, there was no Triborough Bridge, Jones Beach State Park, Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, West Side Highway or Long Island parkway system or Niagara and St. Lawrence power projects. He built all of these and more.

Before Mr. Moses, New York State had a modest amount of parkland; when he left his position as chief of the state park system, the state had 2,567,256 acres. He built 658 playgrounds in New York City, 416 miles of parkways and 13 bridges.

But he was more than just a builder. Although he disdained theories, he was a major theoretical influence on the shape of the American city, because the works he created in New York proved a model for the nation at large. His vision of a city of highways and towers — which in his later years came to be discredited by younger planners — influenced the planning of cities around the nation.

His guiding hand made New York, known as a city of mass transit, also the nation's first city for the automobile age. Under Mr. Moses, the metropolitan area came to have more highway miles than Los Angeles does; Moses projects anticipated such later automobile ori-

Continued on Page B18, Column 1
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does the following quote tell us about Robert Moses as a person? “Those who can, build. Those who can't, criticize.”

2. What was Robert Moses’ role in New York City?

3. What are some of the project Robert Moses was responsible for in New York?

4. After reviewing DOCUMENT 10 and the rest of the documents in this packet, do you agree more with Robert Moses' perspective on city planning or Jane Jacobs'? Why?
VOCABULARY:

Citification: to cause to become urban.

Consensus: general agreement.

Diabolical: belonging to or so evil as to recall the Devil.

Disdain: consider unworthy of one’s consideration.

Espouse: to adopt or support a cause, belief, or way of life.

Infrastructure: the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.

Injunction: an authoritative warning or order.

Irate: feeling or characterized by great anger.

Iterative: relating to or involving the repetition of a process

Libelous: containing a false statement that is damaging to a person’s reputation.

Resonate: to meet someone’s agreement

Revitalize: to give something new life and vitality

Primacy: the state of being most important or strongest

Viaduct: a bridge composed of several small spans for crossing a valley or gorge.