



HOWARD SLATKIN

New York City Department of City Planning

Roger Starr Public Service Award

Presented by Carl Weisbrod

"Planning is the science of everything in New York City."

Howard Slatkin, Deputy Director for Strategic Planning for the NYC Department of City Planning, has always been interested in helping people make sense of how the world around us works, from the smallest scale to the largest. As an undergraduate at Brown University, he left the study of physics, which seeks to explain how matter behaves, for history, which seeks to explain how behavior matters. Mr. Slatkin is from northern New Jersey, moved to New York City soon after graduation, and quickly became fascinated with the urban energy and complex life of the city. "There is something here," he said "that doesn't exist elsewhere, and you don't really understand it until you've found it." He received a master's degree in urban planning from Columbia University in 2000, and that same year began work as a community planner for Brooklyn Community District 1 at the Department of City Planning.

Mr. Slatkin was drawn to a life of public service: "In government you have a responsibility to be able to see multiple sides to every issue—in a sense, it's less important to be in the right than to understand, and to be solution oriented. Ultimately you are trying to do what is in the public's interest. While there is often great

debate over what this means, it's something that genuinely drives me and so many of my colleagues—making the city a better place and doing what is in the best interest of the public." This is, in many ways, the heart of the city planner's work: listening to varied voices from the community and having the foresight to find nuanced and flexible solutions.

Beginning in 2000, Mr. Slatkin was tasked with examining the Northside section of Williamsburg, where, at the time, only one new privately developed residential building had gone up in the prior twenty. His work in the area grew into the 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg Rezoning. The Inclusionary Housing Program created for Greenpoint-Williamsburg has generated well over 1,000 affordable units in the neighborhood, and more than 4,200 units citywide since it was introduced in 2005, and inclusionary housing policy continues to change to meet the evolving needs and conditions of the city.

As the agency's first ever Director of Sustainability, he fostered regulations that promoted car sharing, bicycle parking, street tree planting, stormwater management, energy-efficient buildings and renewable energy generation. Zone Green, a zoning initiative to promote green buildings "was a project where it was critical for us to



Greenpoint-Williamsburg Waterfront before and after rezoning.



listen to experts in the field, and have open communication with the people who are using our regulations. Only by combining their expertise and our own could we get it right. And this has made a difference, and changed the way that many buildings are being built.”

Mr. Slatkin understands that successful planning is a process of listening and learning: “It is about taking the energies and knowledge that exist out there in people, that can often be pointed in all sorts of different directions, and helping to bring them together to accomplish something meaningful. This is what I love about my job.”