CONEY ISLAND AND THE NEOLIBERAL IMAGINATION:

REAL ESTATE, REDEVELOPMENT, AND THE HISTORIC PLACE

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Coney Island, New York has preserved a pronounced aesthetic history and sense of place despite a chronology of near-constant waves of speculative capital and top-down government processes working to reshape its built form. This thesis examines the nature of historic place in Coney Island through the highly contentious rezoning plan passed in 2009 by the Bloomberg administration. The history of place in Coney Island is presented to organize a framework through which the rezoning is assessed, and a chronology of significant redevelopment projects related to the rezoning is discussed. From this, the Childs Restaurant and Shore Theater rehabilitation projects and the Neptune/Sixth high-rise project are cited for their positive precedents in preserving the nature of historic place in Coney Island while perpetuating much-needed economic development, and caution is assigned to the tendency of contemporary redevelopment efforts to commoditize historic imagery while simultaneously destroying historic fabric.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samuel Coons is an undergraduate in the Urban and Regional Studies program in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. Originally from Rochester, New York, he began his undergraduate studies at Duke University in 2013 before transferring to Cornell in the spring of 2015. At Cornell, he served as the Chair of Corporate Outreach and President for the Cornell Theme Park Entertainment Group. He will be pursuing dual Master of Regional Planning and Master of Landscape Architecture degrees at Cornell beginning in the fall of 2017 to further his studies on the intersections of placemaking, themed space, and the historical development of built form.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAI	Central Amusement International
NYC Dept of City Planning	New York City Department of City Planning
NYC EDC	New York City Economic Development Corporation
ODMED	Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

Over countless retellings of the famed shore's history, Coney Island has acquired an eclectic collection of labels: "the People's Paradise", "Sodom by the Sea", "the most human thing God ever made", and bluntly, "America". Studied, drawn, painted, written, and reconstructed, the imagery of Coney Island has been woven into the fabric of modernity, giving rise to an aesthetic as recognizable today as any classical tradition (see Fig. 1). This presence in the global cultural conscience makes Coney Island a vital element in any attempts at theorizing Americana writ-large.

What is the source of this vitality? In order to truly understand Coney Island, physical-temporal realities are just as important as socio-cultural qualities, its intensity of place as integral to its meaning as its broader symbols. Nor should the place's nuance be lost in seeking a "true" Coney Island: though most of its imagery can be sourced from the Golden Age of its leisure venues in the early twentieth century, Coney Island as a place has always been the product of an accumulation of historical processes heightened by New York's volatile urbanism. Any academic investigation to find an era of "authentic" Coney Island in its history will fall short, the place having always been battered by the countless attacks of predatory outsiders, from capitalists to politicians to bureaucrats.

Despite this, Coney Island today faces a particularly dangerous threat to the historical fabric of its place and the community that resides there. The neoliberal reconditioning of space, born from global economic restructuring and the extreme expansion of communication technologies and networks, has fundamentally altered the relationships between people and their places. As processes of movement and sensory exchange leave the human-scale and enter a physical-digital duality, pre-modern histories of place come under high demand and fall under the corporate siege of narrative and commodification. In the case of Coney Island, contemporary redevelopment efforts, through aggressive and selective co-option and manipulation of history, portend to write

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over the distinctive vitality that gave Coney Island its value in the first place. These efforts must be carefully observed and mitigated to prevent the loss of an important cultural history and the destruction of a community that embodies it.

Staeheli (2003) presents five conceptualizations of place: place as physical location or site; place as a cultural and/or social location; place as context; place as constructed over time; and place as process. This multi-dimensionality makes place a dynamic lens through which to examine localized histories of the built environment. In this thesis, through an analysis of the historical transformation of place in Coney Island, the implications of this contemporary redevelopment are judged for their potential effects and influences on the nature of the historic place and its residents.
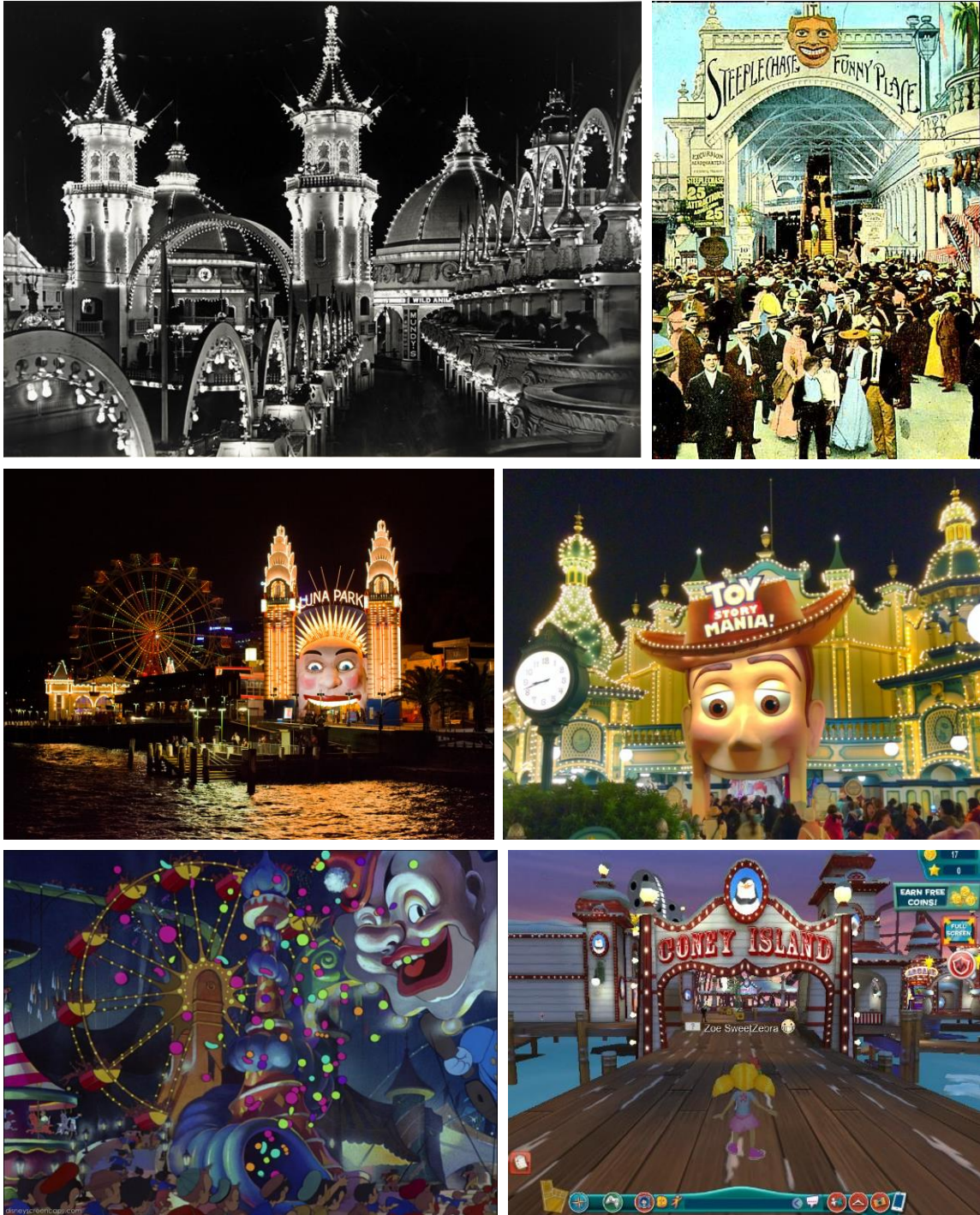
Figure 1: The Imagery of Coney Island Referenced in Built Form and in Popular Media

The imagery of Coney Island's Luna Park (top left) and Steeplechase Park (top right) referenced in built form in Sydney's Luna Park (middle left) and Tokyo's Disneysea (middle right), and in popular media in Disney's Pinocchio (bottom left) and the World of Madagascar Jumpstart videogame (bottom right)

Source lockwise from top left: Gottsho, 1906; Steeplechase, 1998; TDR Explorer, 2015; Jumpstart, 2012; Walt Disney, 1940; Untitled, n.d.

BACKGROUND

Space, Place, and the Local

The theoretical distinction between space and place describes the relations between the physical and the experiential world. Though internal debates in various disciplines endlessly modify the exact definitions of both terms, there is a general consensus on space as Euclidean geometry and place as a locus of meaningful space. Cresswell (2004) describes space as without meaning, becoming place when meaning is invested upon it. For Yuan (1975), meaning is generated implicitly via experience, and as such place is a center of meaning constructed by experience in space. He likens space to movement and place to pauses, locating the human organization of sensory data within spatial patterns of experience. This is the broad impetus behind phenomenological geography, as described succinctly by Feld (1996): "as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place" (pp. 91).

As individuals' organizations of experience and meaning amass on shared loci of space, the social production of place becomes possible. The negotiation of meaning among groups of people experiencing the same or similar sensory data locates community and society in-place. In this way, place is produced by the social negotiation of meaning, and conversely community is dependent on place to form (Cresswell, 2004). This interplay between mobile bodies and their respective sensorial organizations of meaning creates dynamic and highly temporal qualities of place. Place as it is understood socially is thus the spatial and temporal location of meaning, experience, and negotiation related by dialogues of movement and rest.

This, the social production of place, begins to locate a broader collective body of human actions and intentions. Historically, communities in-place develop into stable localities, with layers of built form operating as artifacts of temporally specific iterations of place (Relph, 1993). These artifacts' quasi-permanence impose their respective

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intentions across time and stabilize the place's collective and individual meanings. The built environment thus becomes one of the chief mechanisms in the creation of place, both in its intentioned and negotiated social production itself and resulting physical sensory-producing presence.

Modernity and the End of History

This basic process transforming individuals' sensory data into the social negotiation of place defined the formation and stabilization of communities throughout pre-modern history. Ignatieff (1984) postulates that this was a basic function of mobility: with the grand majority of the world's population limited spatially to its immediate surroundings, the characteristics of a locality were intensified over time and interaction between places was sparse. This bounding of a community's history within a place bound social values, technologies, and culture together spatially as well. The specificity of personhood to locality in antiquity was evident in the practice of people identifying themselves by their name and the place they were from (Relph, 1997).

Though trade, religion, and war would break these cultural bubbles of place, the sheer dearth of those encounters compared to the frequency of local interactions in pre-modernity limited their effect on the strength of place. However, as industrialization ushered in the early onset of modernity, these spatial transgressions increased in frequency and intensity. The development of mass production, mass communication, and mass transportation allowed for methods of living previously inaccessible via "mass culture" (Relph, 1997). The expansion of trans-regional technologies, seen in the rapid spread of electricity, the telegraph, and railroads could hardly be incorporated into the nature of places before the next structural technological shift would arrive, destabilizing social institutions and values of place (Nora, 1989).

These accelerating technologies brought with them homogenizing cultural forces, manifested in part via the built environment. In the United States, improved building

technologies during the height of industrialization allowed for the popularization of architectural revivals at the turn of the twentieth century, blurring vernacular geographies (Relph, 1997). By the 1930s, the flee of Bauhaus members out of Nazi Germany; the growing distaste in Victorian architectural styles seen as classist and tackily ornamental; and the invention of key cast iron, plate glass, and reinforced concrete building technologies gave way to the rapid expansion of modernist architecture into North America. Further, an emboldened federal government during the New Deal and Post-War era facilitated and financed the construction of automobile-centric transportation networks, modernist redevelopment projects, and suburban sprawl across the country.

Spurred by modernism's utopian social ideology, historical built environments were labeled derelict and archaic and targeted for demolition and replacement by these new landscapes of progress. Less utopian were the methods and economic incentives that drove renewal's manifestation, widely understood to have disproportionately targeted and affected poor and minority populations. Further damaging was the destruction of communities attached to places razed for renewal, instigating grief and the loss of intrinsic social services in these vulnerable groups (Freid, 1966). Thus modernism's ultimate effect on the American landscape was demonstrably anti-minority and anti-poor, attacking the intrinsic social qualities of place through direct spatial intervention.

The Neoliberal Commodification of Place

Though modernism's assault on place would subside when the movement began to fracture under the strain of the unfulfilled promises of its social ideology, the corporatization of the American economy after World War II would rise to carry modernism's aesthetic attitude forward with a more explicit reliance on global capital. Relph (1993) sources this in corporations, banks, and contractors' ability to mobilize enormous capital liquidity in the form of financial and material resources, making construction and development a top-down process streamlined through lobbying

municipal governments who conversely look for corporate coffers to leverage risk. He also cites the nature of global telecommunications, which reproduce and transform social processes previously sourced in communities, provide access to any place from anywhere, and lack locality in both transmission and reception. The corporate financing of global development in conjunction and coordination with market-driven telecommunication programming has leveled place-based difference under the guise of cosmopolitan, global, and virtual cultures, leaving geographically indistinguishable landscapes filled with weak derivatives of the modernist styles.

For Harvey (2001), capitalism self-perpetuates the paradox of "spatial fixes", in which capital must set space as immovable infrastructure in order to facilitate space-less hypermobile networks of capital and communication flows. He sees geography as inevitably temporary under global capitalism, with corporate interests driving the continuous fixing and destruction of space to avoid collapsing under the weight of their unsustainabilities. Similarly, Relph (1993) cites the concept of Mumford's "instant environment machine" in describing how developers treat buildings and cities as commodities to be manipulated to promote the self-maintenance and profitability of itself. In this model, the intrinsic qualities of place are only useful to the extent that they can create profit, and by proxy are only valued for their profit-generating qualities.

This model introduces a key phenomenon in the neoliberal commodification of space: the prizing of the historical place under global capitalism for leisure- and pleasure-related purposes. In the absence of community-centric metrics of value, places are measured by the economic potential of their intrinsic qualities. As places are replaced with homogeneity and telecommunication media oversaturate people with images, the desire for authenticity is heightened by the seeming lack of it. The correlation between perceptions of authenticity and experiences in strong places puts such places under high demand, translating to economic demand in the neoliberal marketplace. Ironically, this desire for authenticity is derived in part from the growing weariness that even what is

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perceived as authentic may be manufactured for profit, yet rather than rediscover the authentic in community-centric metrics of value, people use the images presented to them via media to derive conceptions of the authentic place.

Often, the authentic is conflated with nostalgic conceptions of places in their pre-modern state. Galli (2013) argues that nostalgia is born out of "the continual production of the new", tying it intrinsically to post-modernity. He sees the writing of history as the process by which personal nostalgia becomes collective nostalgia, as determined by powerful institutions' judgments of what is legitimate and desirable, communicated via media. This is the fallacy of post-modernity and the referentialism of post-modern architecture. Relph (1993) lambasts post-modern environments as a solution to the built symptoms of modernity, calling them "nice lies" fulfilling only the profitable quantity of "heritage" demanded by market forces. Thus, Disney's Times Square redevelopment projects only the hyperimagery of capitalism in its presentation of New York, Universal Studio's City Walk creates a dense urban streetscape in the sprawling neighborhoods of the Hollywood Hills, and, as Macy (1996) describes, Seaside evokes memories not of "places actually experienced," but rather, "fictitious memories—constructions of the childhood memories of a privileged few, diffused through cinema and television re-runs."

The connection between images and commodities has been long established, understood as corporations controlling images as a means towards winning the commoditized audience (Smythe, 1977). The analysis of images, particularly from the marketing materials of these institutions, therefore becomes a key tool in discerning realities of power in the built environment. The tourism bureau, the developer, and the city hall seek to seize the demand for authentic experiences, harnessing media to control images of places in which they hold economic stakes or at least overwhelm media that runs contrary to their messages of authenticity. In doing so, these dominant capitalist forces redefine the value of the authentic, both for those who experience the places they control and in the built environments of the places themselves.

THE HISTORY OF CONEY ISLAND

This section will examine the nature of historic place in the neoliberal economic environment described above through the case study of Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York. Unlike other case studies of historic place under neoliberal market forces, Coney Island is unique in its long established history of speculative capitalism driving its urban development. As such, the common conclusions of neoliberalism simply commoditizing historic place are not as easily ascertained. This section will be devoted to exploring the characteristics of Coney Island as a place, against which contemporary redevelopment efforts can be measured for their value or detriment.

Coney Island as Speculative Urbanism

Born in the early-1800s out of the recreation economy produced by growing wages and shorter workweeks in the early Industrial Era, Coney Island's historical development has always been closely intertwined with the historical urbanism of Brooklyn. While the upper classes with the money for extended vacations would often retreat to the isolated beach resorts of Newport, Saratoga Springs, and Long Branch, Coney Island's proximity to the city made it a viable location for shorter day trips by the working class (Frank, 2015). As such, the shore quickly became a target of investors seeking to harness the broad growth in disposable income after the Civil War and its development inextricably tied to the development of transit and patterns of accessibility through the city (Kasson, 1978).
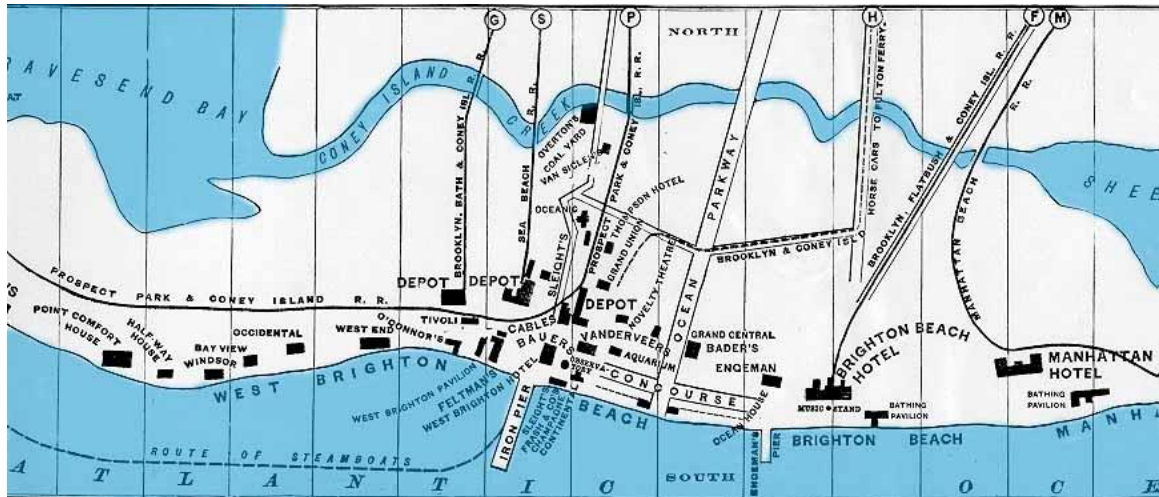
Figure 2: 1879 Map of transportation Routes into Coney Island
Source: Map, 1879

This development and transit were often financed hand-in-hand, with developers and investors speculating on the future demand for the attractions they would build simultaneously with the transit to service them (see Fig. 2). The Coney Island House, the shore's very first resort, was built in 1829 in coordination with the completion of Coney Island Road as the first permanent connection with mainland Brooklyn (Sullivan, 2015). With the first east-west road on the island not built until the 1890s, visitors would take the transit route corresponding to the resort they wished to visit. Developers began to build and market iconic structures or novel gimmicks to persuade patrons to choose their destinations before they even boarded a route, and routes were carefully chosen to capture the largest populations and direct them to their respective resorts.

The shore's earliest beach resorts were catered to the city's wealthy elite and middle class, with Brooklyn's working class priced out by the various trolley and rail routes' ticket prices (Parascandola, 2015). It was the 35-cent ferry in 1847 and more dramatically the nickel trolley in 1895, however, that truly opened Coney Island to New York's masses; a 1905 study of working-class families in Manhattan found that the majority made at least one trip to Coney Island a summer, often skipping lunches and walking to work to save money for the trip (Kasson, 1978). As attendance swelled,

seafood shacks, amusements, and music stands filled in the isolated spatial development of the major resorts and created a coherent urbanism along the shore (Kasson, 2015). This infill of attractions was facilitated by an absence of regulation and pervasive corruption under political boss John McKane and would create the grounds for the class and racial mixing that would come to define Coney Island as an egalitarian landscape (Frank, 2015).

The careful distance of Coney Island to Brooklyn and Manhattan proved close enough for day trips and far enough to fall under the eye of New York's infant regulatory bodies. McKane's political machine controlled and facilitated vice in Coney Island's formative years, paying off police while prostitution, gambling, and petty crime flourished (Kasson, 2015). Though McKane would end up in prison in 1894, by that time Coney Island had established a reputation as a playground free of the social norms of Victorian New York. Following in the footsteps of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Coney Island represented the new world of industrial leisure, where traditional hierarchies of social status fell to new capitalist hierarchies of wealth (Coons, 2015). In an environment where all the inhabitants were leveled via a common entrance fee, norms of race, class, and sexuality were relaxed and the hedonist pleasures of the new Industrial Age came to fore.

Thus, Coney Island entered its Golden Age; though McKane's "Sodom by the Sea" would subside to George Tilyou's claim "vice does not pay as well as decency," the loose development regulations, waves of speculative capital creating large and dynamic projects, and broad egalitarian atmosphere would not only remain but grow. Aggressive competition between attractions at all scales drove innovation at a breakneck pace: from Paul Boyton's Sea Lion Park in 1895 to Tilyou's Steeplechase Park in 1897 to Frederic Thompson and Elmer Dundy's Luna Park in 1903, social mores were challenged and technical extremes flaunted in grand shock-and-awe campaigns competing to draw nickels from the masses (Kasson, 2015). In this way, up to its decline in the 1920s, Coney

Island at its most historically vibrant and poignant was a microcosm of American industrial urbanism in all its capitalist might and volatility: socially progressive, flooded with speculative capital, and dynamically competitive.

The Evolution of Coney Island's Built Environment

Though most literature focuses on the rise and fall of Coney Island's entertainment districts as the critical arc of the shore's historical significance, its volatile history as a residential neighborhood is just as valuable and necessary in understanding its contemporary built environment. The immigrants who settled along the coast to work in its leisure facilities and remained after their decline contributed to the intrinsic qualities of the place since its earliest conceptions as an urban space. Through decades of working, operating, and owning various attractions, stores, and restaurants, these dynamic populations have facilitated the evolution of Coney Island's culture and built environment in the gaps where top-down speculative capital was absent or failed.

Similarly to the spread of attractions along the beach, Coney Island's rapid growth in housing during the late-nineteenth century occurred largely without plan, with wood frame tenement and bungalow housing to house local workers developing along the main avenues connecting to Brooklyn (see Appendix A). Even the foundational 1916 Zoning Ordinance avoided strict mandates for the neighborhood, instead leaving the areas not zoned for business uses as "unrestricted" or "undetermined". Developing first along the Ocean Avenue corridor connecting Coney Island to Brooklyn and then westward on Mermaid Avenue, a diverse typology formed in the absence of regulatory separation of uses. Brick structures housing commercial space grew along Mermaid Avenue, parallel to the entertainment district on Surf Avenue. To the north on Neptune Avenue, light industry developed along Coney Island Creek. By 1920, a school and church had appeared on West 17th Street, catering to the growing residential community occupying the wood structures on the streets running north to south.

By the 1920s Coney Island's leisure facilities had started to lose business to the movie theater, which brought spectacle closer to home than a train ride to the beach, and the neighborhood's housing was haphazard in form, poor in quality, and inhabited by low-income workers increasingly faced with the pressures of economic decline (The American Experience, 2000). Like many outer-borough residential areas at the time, the neighborhood fell into disrepair (Mironova, 2014). By the time the Depression and War had passed, the community found itself in a radically different national context, one driven by automobile-centric development, television media, and increasingly restrictive conservative values. With the trends in the leisure economy building towards the mid-century suburban theme park boom, Coney Island's decentralized array of land-restricted attractions met their match; Luna Park closed after a series of fires in the 1940s, and Steeplechase Park operated until 1964 (Kasson, 2015).

Figure 3: Aerial Views of Coney Island from 1951 and 2017
Aerial views of Coney Island from 1951 (top) and 2017 (bottom) revealing changes in built form over the Modern Era; note the large-lot clearance and redevelopment projects along Surf Ave and patchwork vacancies in the amusement areas.
Source: Aero Service Corp, 1951 and Google Earth, 2017

At the same time, the rise of Robert Moses and modernist housing policies in the mid-century brought radical changes to Coney Island's built form. Moses was an unabashed critic of Coney Island, decrying how its beaches "lend themselves to summer exploitation, to honky-tonk catchpenny amusement resorts, shacks built without reference to health, sanitation, safety and decent living" (Mahler, 2012). He successfully pushed the rezoning of blocks of amusement area into residential uses, and the 1967 Vest Pocket Community Development Plan sanctioned wholesale slum clearance (See Appendix A; Mironova, 2014). Neglect spread through the neighborhood as landlords abandoned maintaining their properties and waited for the city to buy them out. The high-rise and experimental housing projects that eventually would replace much of the dilapidated housing stock was filled with not only local residents but black and Hispanic groups displaced by urban renewal elsewhere in the city. The end result of the Modern Era in Coney Island was prolonged economic decline, expansive vacant lots where amusements had been located and redevelopment never occurred, and a hyper-segregated population varying from block-to-block and project-to-project (see Fig. 3).

With the city's fiscal crisis of the 1970s, Coney Island became a laboratory for experimental housing strategies (Mironova, 2014). Beyond the high-rise public housing projects, various other developments sought to create affordable housing through alternative models, in many ways using principles and design strategies that would later be described as postmodern. Seven complexes were built by the New York Urban Development Corporation, an architectural innovation group that sought to use modernist architectural designs in a contextually conscious way. In 1974, a community group called the Neighborhood Improvement Organization successfully created a preservation plan for the Italian-American community east of 16th Street. The group later reformed as the Astella Development Corporation, which would go on to build about 1,000 single-family, owner-occupied homes in the 1980s. Astella gained favor from the city for these projects by using front-end subsidies and not requiring ongoing operational funding.

Since the 1980s, Coney Island has faced a series of major redevelopment projects coordinated and contested between the private sector and the city. A plan to legalize gambling and lure casino developers resulted in wild land speculation through the amusement areas, putting many local operators out of business and leaving more vacant lots along the beachfront (Busà, 2009). Despite the renewed flurry of interest in the shore, gambling was never legalized and no casinos ever built. In 1986, the city approved a plan presented by businessman Horace Bullard to recreate Steeplechase Park, but the development ran aground in Rudy Guiliani's tenure as mayor in the 1990s (Busà, 2009). Giuliani preferred a plan to build a minor league baseball stadium on Bullard's site; when Bullard scaled his proposed park down and included rehabilitating the derelict Thunderbolt roller coaster, Giuliani launched an early morning demolition of the coaster, citing that it was structurally unstable and a danger to the public. Giuliani would get the MCU Park, taking up a large block of former amusement area, and Bullard gave up on his plans in the neighborhood.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration also fixed its sights on redeveloping Coney Island beginning in 2003, this time through a comprehensive rezoning of the largely vacant amusement areas (Busà, 2009). This effort was at odds with Thor Equities, a national developer that began purchasing large lots in Coney Island in 2004 in anticipation of the rezoning (Miller, 2009). Thor founder Joseph Sitt produced various plans for the site, including bringing in a Bellagio Hotel, building mixed-use luxury high-rise condos, creating a commercial strip with fast food chains and big box retail, and even opening a small amusement park (Busà, 2009). However, these radical visions were confounded by Thor's reputation for speculating on Bloomberg's redevelopment patterns and flipping properties soon after lobbying for favorable rezoning.

Despite the City expressing concerns with Thor's past, Bloomberg, hoping to follow through in preserving the amusement district in the rezoning plan, offered $110 million for a portion of the developer's land (Miller, 2009). Thor refused, demanding

twice as much, and called the City's bluff by beginning to evict small amusement operators (Busà, 2009). The final rezoning plan was approved in 2009 in an attempted compromise between Thor's proposals and the City's own intentions for maintaining the amusement areas. However, the space zoned for open-air amusements shrank from 61 acres to merely 9 (see Fig. 4 and 5); in its place were planned 4,500 new units of housing and 500,000 square feet of new retail (NYC Dept of City Planning, 2009).

The 2009 rezoning plan's emphasis on large lot sites and high-rise residential structures and Bloomberg's willingness to comply with dubious-intentioned developers illustrates the neoliberal restructuring of government processes into facilitators of capital accumulation that defined Bloomberg's tenure as Mayor. Though these processes may resemble the shore's history of speculative capitalist development, where such development previously operated on the tabula rasa of the urban frontier, they now threaten a sizable low-income community geographically cornered by rising rents across Brooklyn. Coney Island's contemporary development thus builds on a tense landscape of diverging local needs and neoliberal interests, framing the conflicts to come.
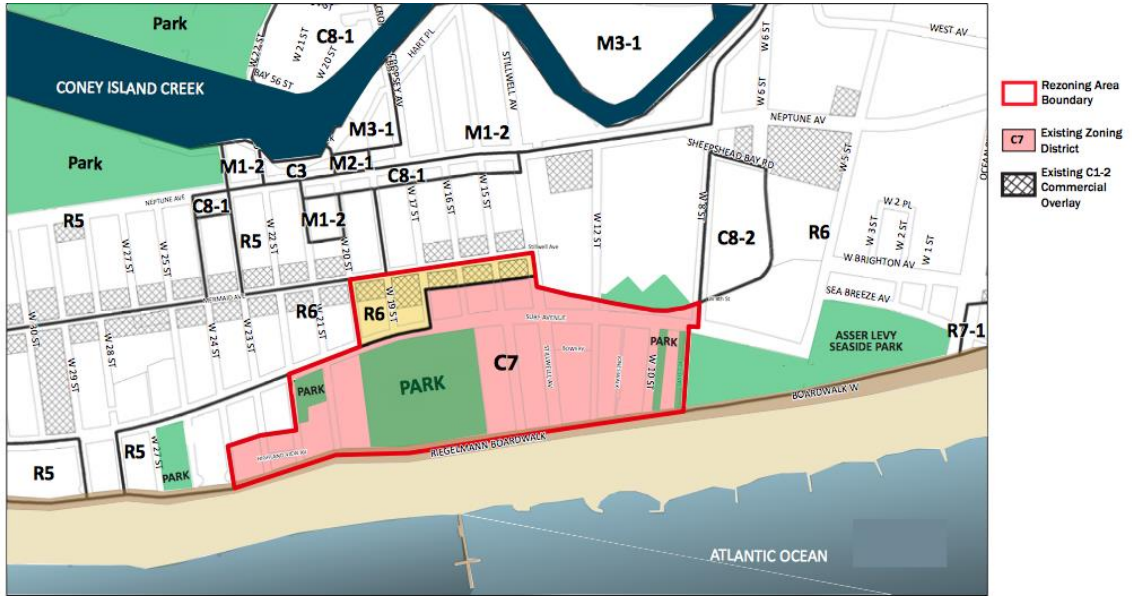
Figure 5: Zoning Map Pre-2009 Comprehensive Rezoning Plan
The spaces zoned for amusement uses are labeled under C7.
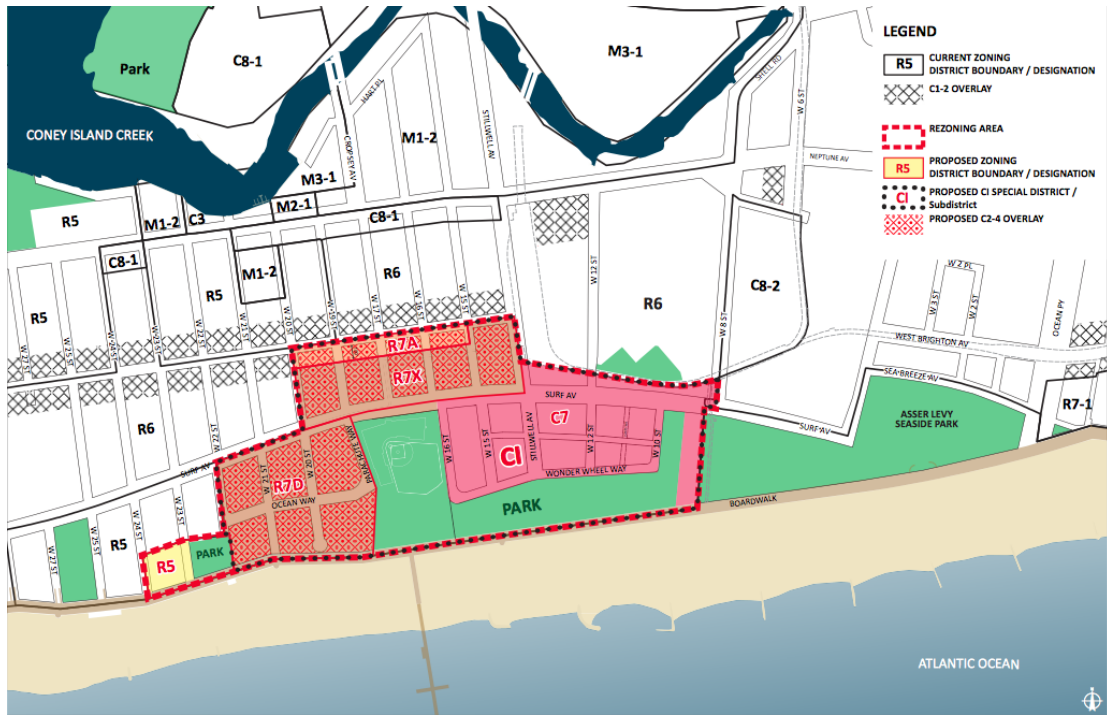*Source: NYC Dept of City Planning, 2009*

Figure 4: Revised Zoning Map Under the 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning Plan
Spaces zoned for amusement uses are labeled under C1 while new residential zones are seen in red.
Also note the increased green space on the previous amusement zone.
Source: NYC Dept of City Planning, 2009

The first major development after Bloomberg's rezoning was the creation of two new amusement areas on city-owned parcels purchased from Thor's holdings in November 2009. Opening in 2010, Luna Park and Scream Zone were a joint effort between the city and Central Amusement International (CAI), an operations subsidiary of the Italian attraction manufacturer Zamperla Group (NYC EDC, 2010). The city invested $6.6 million for infrastructure improvements while CAI contributed $30 million for site and attraction development. Taking on a carnival-esque blacktop model similar to the previous tenant of the site Astroland, the amusements notably conflicted with the rezoning's land use distinction between commercial and park zones, implying that their 10-year lease may be a placeholder to spark economic development in the surrounding blocks before being replaced by more permanent and zoning-appropriate development.

The temporary nature of the CAI properties is reinforced by the recent RFP for five development sites between the Cyclone roller coaster and MCU Park (Wilson, 2017). Though the parcels do not include the CAI sites, located instead in the place of the dead end stretches of West 12th Street, Stillwell Avenue, West 15th Street, and West 10th Street, the RFP specifically notes the creation of a Wonder Wheel Way, cutting east-west halfway between Bowery Street and the boardwalk (see Fig. 6). This proposed street cuts directly through the current Luna Park and Scream Zone properties, suggesting at the very least a substantial relocation of attractions in the middle of the CAI site, while delineating the remaining Thor Equities lots and filling several notable commercial gaps along the boardwalk's. Additionally, an extension of West 16th Street will fill a portion of the massive linear lot between the new Thunderbolt roller coaster and MCU Park.

Figure 6: 2017 RFP Diagram
2017 RFP diagram showing five new parcels and proposed Wonder Wheel Way.
Source: Wilson, 2017

Despite Sitt's grandstanding during the rezoning process and the quick demolition of the 1899 Henderson's Music Hall, Thor's lots on Surf Avenue sit largely underutilized. The site at the corner of Stillwell and Surf Avenue opposite Nathan's houses a number of small storefronts, including a candy shop, Little Caesars, Brooklyn Nets shop, and a Wahlburgers franchise with a rooftop deck. The shed structure is decorated with a number of referential elements, including a roller coaster sculpture on the roof and murals of circus tents, the Steeplechase Funny Face, and the words "CONEY ISLAND" above the storefronts, should one forget where they are (see Fig. 7). In 2012, Thor also purchased the 1928 Eldorado Building, which has housed the Eldorado Disco Palace of Bumper Cars since 1973, and displays it for rent on their website with an altered façade advertising an arcade and restaurant in faux neon in the place of the current vendor's distinctively-lit façade. Despite this discontinuity and a brief eviction scare in 2012, the bumper cars remain and Thor has yet to announce alternative plans for the site.

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In similar nature, Thor's vacant lot on Stillwell Avenue has been used as the site of the Coney Art Walls, a summer street art festival co-curated by Sitt himself. Composed of 25 concrete slabs spread around the lot, the festival brings various street artists to create murals as visitors watch. Sitt brought in Brooklyn food festival organizer Smorgasburg and public space consultants Biederman Redevelopment Ventures in 2015 to organize programming and entertainment like a trapeze school and wrestling matches (Real Estate Weekly, 2015). Though broadly well received, Coney Art Walls received criticism for being tone-deaf, from locals for Smorgasburg's $19 lobster rolls and from art critics for romanticizing the imagery of Coney Island while avoiding neighborhood politics in favor of general anti-corporate symbolism (Viveros-Fauné, 2015).

Figure 7: Façades of Thor's Stillwell and Surf Avenue Property
Note the arcade signage over the vacant retail space.
Source: Vita, 2014

This strategy of temporary and low-cost/low-revenue place holding reflects Sitt's repeated comments over the past seven years of his desire for additional variances to the rezoning for which he was not able to lobby in 2009. These include removing the restriction on hotels on the south side of Surf Avenue and the 2,500 square foot maximum retail size that Sitt infamously decried by presenting a list of big-box retailers that would not be permitted by the rule, including Toys R Us, Hot Topic, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Banana Republic (Brownstoner, 2009). Though the city has held fast against the requested variances, as of May 2016 Thor still had an expressed interest in developing a movie theater and "a great big hotel" on their Stillwell Avenue block (La Guerre, 2016). In the meantime however, Thor's frequent labeling of "arcades" in promotional materials and facade signage for empty storefronts implies a half-hearted compliance with the city's requirement for 15% amusement land use on all street frontage south of Surf Avenue (See Fig. 7; Vita, 2013).

While Sitt has chosen to wait for variances to move forward on his development plans, other developers have moved forward more decisively. Red Apple Group's Ocean Dreams project, a mixed-use luxury residential development between West 35th and West 37th Street on the coast's west end, has been in flux since 2005 amidst owner John Catsimatidis's demands for a variance on the site's maximum height restriction and threats to shift his focus to projects in Florida. He described his intentions in a 2016 article with Commercial Observer:

> We would love to have taller building that people can be proud of, but if
> we hit the city for more, then they are going to hit us with affordable
> housing. I want to make it looks like Miami Beach, and what's wrong with
> that? (La Guerre, 2016).

Despite the city standing fast against Catsimatidis's demands, Red Apple Group filed plans for the development in January 2017 starting with a 21-story tower, the first of three planned that will total 415 units (Cohen, 2017).

Also moving forward with development is lender-turned-developer iStar Financial, whose property holdings sit on the western edge of the rezoned district next to the Abe Stark Skating Rink. The group's first project on the boardwalk, the 5,000-seat Ford Amphitheater, opened in 2016 after a contentious construction process stretching over eight years and including a lawsuit by the New York City Community Garden Coalition over the 2004 decommissioning of the lot as a park (Corcoran, 2014). The project used $50 million in taxpayer funds and included the restoration of the landmarked 1923 Childs Restaurant building, soon to be reopened as a restaurant with rooftop café and amphitheater stage access that can be reversed for indoor shows during the winter (Aswad, 2016). The site also includes the one-acre Seaside Park, which doubles as a public park accessible via the boardwalk and added seating overlooking the amphitheater during shows. Subleased to Live Nation for operations, the amphitheater hosted 40 shows in 2016, including a free concert series.

The group's website describes the amphitheater project as a prerequisite and "catalyst" for their projected one million square feet of residential development on the site. Almost immediately in conjunction with the opening of the amphitheater, iStar filed plans for a nine-story mixed-use development next to the amphitheater site containing 135 units and space for a "philanthropic or nonprofit institution" (Mashayekhi, 2016). In September 2016, however, iStar sold the site to Long Island-based nonprofit Concern for Independent Living and developer Georgica Green Ventures, which using state and city subsidies is allocating 82 units to homeless veterans and 53 to affordable housing provision (Acitelli, 2016). The partnership hopes to build up to 400 units in six more buildings on the lot currently owned by iStar, suggesting a development shift in line with Mayor Bill de Blasio's prioritization of supportive housing across the city.

Similarly to the rehabilitation and reuse of the Childs Restaurant by iStar, the landmarked 1925 Shore Theater saw new attention in December 2015 when it was purchased by PYE Properties for $14 million from Jasmine Bullard, the daughter of

Horace of Thunderbolt project infamy (NYC Dept of Finance, 2015). The structure

housed Vaudeville acts through much of the century until 1972 when it became a porn

theater, eventually falling into disrepair and gaining notoriety in the 21st century for the

homeless squatters residing inside. After investigating the structural integrity of the

building and theater, PYE released preliminary renderings in June showing new hotel and

retail in the historic tower and the theater structure replaced by a glass catering hall and

rooftop pool (see Fig. 8; Ellefson, 2016). The building's landmark status only requires

permission for changes to the historic exterior, raising concerns among community

activist groups about the future of the historic theater's interior. While the group is

courting national-level tenants for the retail spaces, they are quick to note that they have

not filed formal plans for the development, describing the renderings as "incredibly

preliminary…it could be anything in the future" (Lynch, 2016).

Figure 8: Renderings of PYE's Shore Theater Project
Note replacement of yellow rear theater structure with glass catering hall and street-level retail.
Source: Ellefson, 2016

Certainly the largest current project on Coney Island though located further north off the amusement district, the massive mixed-use Neptune/Sixth development by Cammeby International has garnered significant media attention as the first high-rise built on the shore since the public housing period. Located next to Trump Village and adjacent to the Neptune Avenue F Train station, the two-site project includes 325,000 square feet of retail, office, and parking with a 430-foot tall 575-unit residential tower (See Fig. 9; Cammeby, 2017). Cammeby, which owns and manages more than 2,000 residential units in Coney Island and South Brooklyn, has taken up the motto "Invested in Your Community Tomorrow" for the project, detailing the development's value for the community through its inclusion of public spaces, an 800-car parking garage, and pharmacies and banks in its retail spaces (though these amount to the CVS and Apple Bank that resided in the existing retail structure being allowed to renew their leases in the new development). Despite these promises, the development has run into its share of community troubles, including a $75 million lawsuit by existing clothing retailer DII for construction-related damages and concerns from residents of the surrounding co-ops about the site's toxic history as a manufactured gas plant (Baird-Remba, 2016). However, by March 2017 DII had signed a lease for both retail space in the new development as well as office space for its corporate offices, possibly implying an end to the legal fight between the two parties (Brenzel, 2017). The environmental disputes remain unresolved as construction begins to progress in earnest.

Figure 9: Rendering for Cammeby's Neptune/Sixth Project
Rendering for Cammeby's Neptune/Sixth project, with the 430-foot tall residential tower at center and retail and office space below and to the right
Source: Cammeby,

A missing piece of the development puzzle in Coney Island is the land holdings of Taconic Investment Partners. A major player in the 2009 rezoning process, the group bought two parcels along Surf Avenue in 2005 with potential for 2,000 units of residential housing and 200,000 square feet of retail (Acitelli, 2016). Bearing the monikers "Coney Island North Venture" and "Coney Island South Venture", Taconic owned seven blocks that composed the planned high-rise redevelopment of the western side of the rezoning, including a $13 million lot previously owned by Thor that was flipped to Taconic for $90 million (deMause, 2012). Issues soon arose, however, when the group defaulted on their loan from iStar for the South Venture in 2011, transferring the Child Restaurant lot described above to the lender and incidentally birthing the amphitheater project (Acitelli, 2016). North Venture, currently a long stretch of parking lots opposite MCU Park, went for sale on the market in 2014 and has yet to sell. Both lots are curiously still advertised on their website, and Taconic's cryptic 2014 remarks on the

possibility of "exploring joint ventures" indicates that this significant section of the amusement district may lay undeveloped for some time (Hughes, 2014).

As private developers begin to rediscover their interest in Coney Island, the city has embarked on a long overdue infrastructure overhaul of the blocks immediately to the north and east of MCU Park. These improvements include new watermains, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, curbs, and street and sidewalk reconstruction and furniture, including lights, trash cans, bike racks, and benches (NYC EDC, 2017). The project also will raise grades at certain locations particularly vulnerable to flooding to promote resiliency, a frequent topic of concern among residents after the damages from Hurricane Sandy. With construction starting in Summer 2017, these infrastructure improvements seek to further incentivize development in the vacant lots west of MCU Park, with over half of the improvement area targeting blocks included in the 2009 rezoning district. Despite this positive progress, the limited scope and scale of this phase indicates that further work will be necessary as development progresses, including significant electrical infrastructure and expanded capacities for public schools, libraries, and day care facilities (ODMED, 2009).

Contemporary Demographics and Housing

Coney Island today carries a diversity in both demographic makeup and built form, reflecting the previous century of experimentation and change. The neighborhood's 31,965 residents are disproportionately elderly compared to Brooklyn as a whole, with less Millennial presence (see Fig. 10). With a majority immigrant population, the neighborhood experiences dramatic racial shifts over time as ethnic groups move in and leave: the 2010 Census shows the population as 41% white, up from 36% in 2000; black populations have fallen from 42% in 2000 to 36% in 2010. Asians make up the third largest race, growing from 6% of the population in 2000 to 9% in 2010 (see Fig. 11).

The tumulus history of Coney Island's residential populations is visible in the existing housing stock, which reflects its history as a laboratory for urban housing strategies (see Fig.3). Of the 12,101 housing units, there is a vacancy rate of 10.2%, and 83.4% are renter-occupied (US Census Bureau, 2013). Only 4.7% of units are single-family homes, while 65.8% of units are in structures with 20 or more units. Over 4,000 of the units are public housing, with almost another 5,000 units subsidized by federal, state, or city funds (Mironova, 2014). The neighborhood has not seen the influx of young occupants to the same degree as the rest of Brooklyn, with 50.3% of occupants having moved in before 2000 compared to 39.9% for the borough (US Census Bureau, 2013).

At the far western peninsula is Sea Gate, New York's first gated community, formed in 1899 as a wealthy resort town and today holding 832 units, mostly single-family homes (Judem, 2011 and Hughes, 2010). Differing from the larger Coney Island region, only 54.9% of units are renter-occupied, 77% of residents are white, and the median household income is $55,862 (US Census Bureau, 2013). Homeowners pay a "double tax" of community dues as well as city taxes to cover security, maintenance, and beach upkeep, measuring at 13% of assessed home value (Hughes, 2010).

Moving east along Surf Ave towards the amusement zone, senior homes flank the beachfront. Predominantly white, over 60% of the 1,060 residents south of Surf Ave to the amusement zone is older than 65 years old (US Census Bureau, 2010). The median household income is $13,368; 65% of the population is on Social Security, while 79% has used food stamps within the past year (US Census Bureau, 2013).

North of Surf Ave are two blocks of varied housing types, including public housing high-rises, low-rises, tenements, and owner-occupied units, often with distinct class and race differences from development to development. The block from Surf Ave to Mermaid Ave is predominantly black and Hispanic, composing 40% and 28% of the 16,588 residents, respectively (US Census Bureau, 2010). These blocks have a median household income of $20,058. The 7,124 living on the blocks from Mermaid Ave to

Neptune Ave are more evenly split among black, Hispanic, and white residents at 33%, 36%, and 22%, respectively (US Census Bureau, 2010). The median household income is slightly higher as well, at $24,874 (US Census Bureau, 2013).
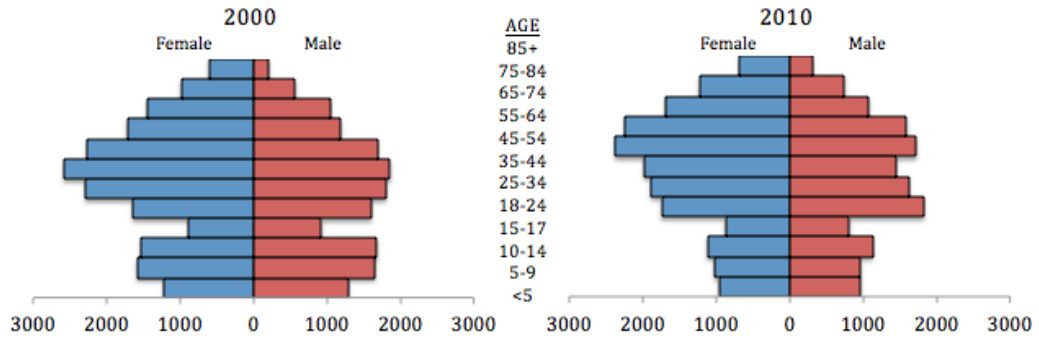

Figure 8: Population pyramids for Coney Island from 2000 and 2010 Census data.
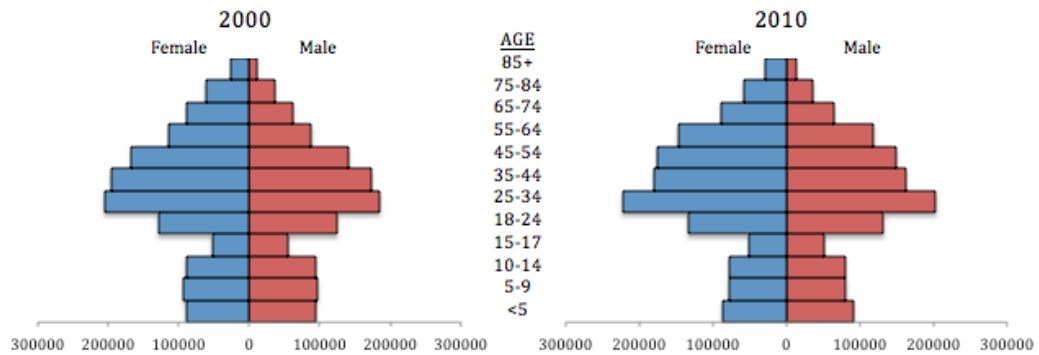

Figure 10: Population pyramids for Coney Island (top) and Brooklyn (bottom) from 2000 (left) and 2010 (right) census data
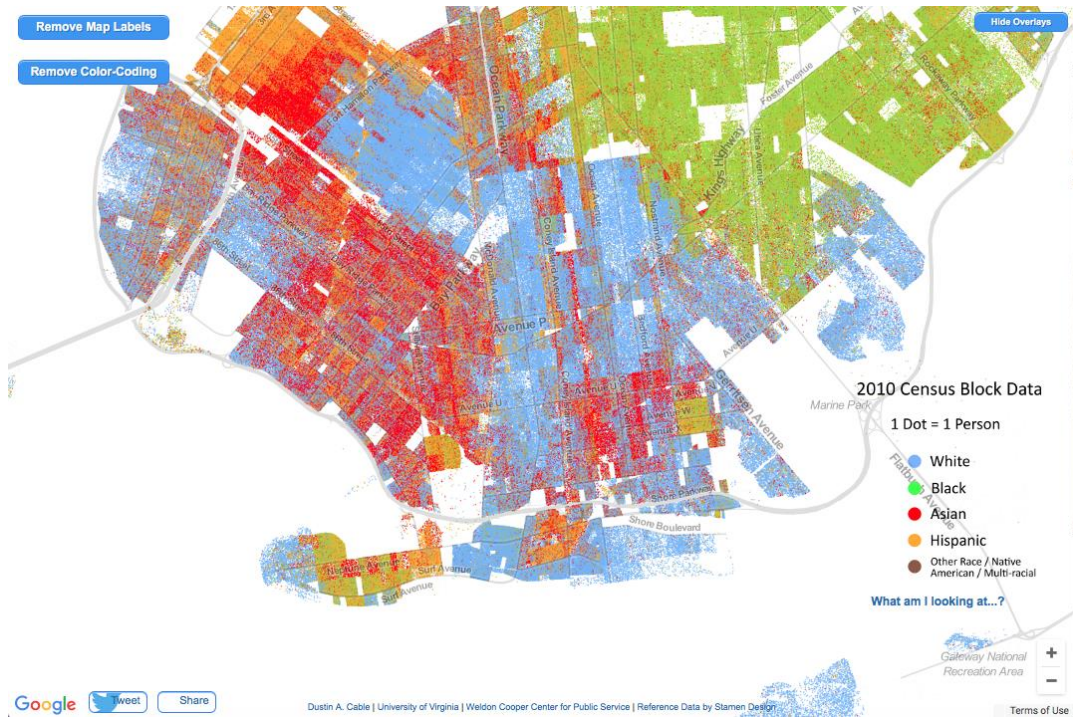
Figure 11: Race Dot Map from 2010 Census Data

Note the acute racial mixing compared to Brooklyn's homogeneity above.
Source: Cable, 2013

DISCUSSION

The 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning created the conditions for a clash between developers and citizens and a platform around which to organize. The neoliberal economics and top-down bureaucratic planning of the Bloomberg administration initiated an incredible grassroots resistance and awareness movement within Coney Island and Brooklyn. Online blogs by local residents leaked documents, critiqued renderings, and reported thoroughly on public statements by elected representatives and developers. Larger citywide real estate and architecture websites, often with national readership, took this fieldwork and proliferated it, increasingly voicing dissent and distrust as the interactions between developers and the city grew more oblique and contradictory. And like most grassroots political movements that grow to national attention, citizen resistance became political opportunity, best seen in State Senator Carl Kruger allegedly bussing in hundreds of people wearing yellow anti-Bloomberg hats to a 2007 Coney Island Development Corporation information meeting (Robau, 2007).

Amidst this clash of grassroots organizing and political theater, distilling the true intentions and incongruences between the developers, politicians, and residents becomes difficult. Even within these categories, the diversity of opinions and interests obfuscate attempts to broadly reconcile community development versus economic development. Further, Coney Island's historic nature has changed and would be problematic to use as a framework for the neighborhood's future. Though its historical development has always been fueled by a raw capitalist energy, Coney Island has developed into a site of valuable history on the regional and national scale, and as such relegating the shore's future to the will of speculative capital is not historically genuine but ignorantly rash.

In many ways, though the developers appear as the villains of the rezoning story, they served as the barometer of the community's reading of Coney Island as place. The progression and evolution of renderings and proposals, mediated by the actions and

reactions of the government and the public, reflect a community arbitration of place in the context of neoliberal corporatism (see Appendix B). First bombastic and overtly commercial, these developers misjudged the value of historical capitalism in conceptions of place among Coney Island's residents, their equations of Coney Island with Las Vegas, Times Square, and Miami Beach falling to the objections of the public. Their reactions are notable: Thor dropped the condominiums from their amusement district plans and switched out a corporate architecture office with a themed entertainment firm; Cammeby oriented its entire marketing program for Neptune/Sixth towards the value of the development to the community; and iStar sold one of the most prominent lots in the rezoning district to supportive housing developers. These actions reflect the capacity of strong histories of place to rally strength in their communities and in turn the ability of these communities to defend those histories.

Despite these reassuring trends in the narrative of the rezoning and its aftermath, the implications of redevelopment in Coney Island is still ambiguous and implicitly dangerous. Many of the rezoning plan's stated objectives, though generally valiant in nature, can be problematized within the context of an administration that gives preference to market-driven modes of community improvement (ODMED, 2007). The focus on creating a year-round economic base for the neighborhood while preserving the historical focus on an entertainment economy incentivizes a retail-oriented consumerism, seen in the various proposals for theater-retail complexes reminiscent of the urban entertainment districts proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s. The plan's intention to protect the amusement district by demarcating a nine-acre zone similarly builds perverse incentives, framing the zone as the desired extents of amusements in the neighborhood and ignoring their historic extents, and leaving the extension of entertainment uses beyond the zone to market forces. These tensions are exacerbated by a loose projection of enforcement in the plan, confusingly using parkland and amusement uses interchangeably and allowing for exceptions to its image-preserving height limit through affordable housing bonuses. In

the absence of other methods of market control beyond zoning, Bloomberg's plan opens Coney Island to the volatility of contemporary real estate practices.

This volatility is paired with a tendency for neoliberal development to produce reductive architectural form, often frugal mixes of the International Style and Postmodern referentialism. In Coney Island, the retreat of developers away from the radical imagery of early Vegas-esque proposals corresponded with a muting of architectural ambition in the redevelopment effort. The city's hiring of Miami-based architecture firm Arquitectonica for early master planning studies in 2006 and the influences of this work visible in the final rezoning plan exhibit a timid acceptance by the city of Miami Modern as a framework style for including high-rise development in the neighborhood. Catsimatidis's claiming of Coney Island literally as the next Miami Beach carried this framework further, as did Thor's leaked renderings showing 40-story condominium towers bisecting the Wonder Wheel and the Parachute Jump. Yet these visions, when deemed too radical for Coney Island by its residents, would give way to even more generic forms (Appendix B). In areas of redevelopment fraught with community-developer tensions, architectural reductivism often proves least controversial and therefore most desired to developers pushing land uses incongruent with the existing neighborhood.

Despite these broad retreats towards architecturally bland forms, the historical fabric of Coney Island remains an enormously lucrative component in selling redevelopment projects to the government and public. Similarly to the reduction of historical architectures into easily replicable frugal contemporary forms, historical fabric is often reduced to blunt iconography by elevating the imagery of key landmarks to represent singular wholes of a place's meaning. This is seen in the almost guaranteed inclusion of the Cyclone roller coaster, Wonder Wheel, Nathan's, or Parachute Jump into the marketing materials of redevelopment projects (see Figure 12). By associating their

proposals with undisputed cornerstones of Coney Island's history, developers attempt to brute-force their designs into the historic landscape of the place.

Figure 12: 2016 Rendering of iStar's Amphitheater Project
The author's favorite example of iconography in the marketing of redevelopment projects: a 2016 rendering of iStar's amphitheater project featuring the Parachute Jump peeking out from above the stage's shell at top right.
Source: Ford Amphitheater, 2016

This iconography can be tone-deaf when reduced too far. What may be conceived as innocent homage in a surface-level understanding of a place's historic context can come off as pandering and commercial, a natural byproduct of the capitalist intentions behind these sorts of commoditized images. This was the case when the city commissioned a new roller coaster on the site where Guiliani had demolished the Thunderbolt and gave it the same name, as with the new carnival-esque Luna Park that sits a few blocks off from the public housing complex that was built on the site of the original. Even more so, Thor's demolition of a historic 1899 music hall and replacing it with a retail box plastered with images of Steeplechase's Funny Face and the words "Coney Island" is ironic to the point of satire. Like Harvey's "spatial fixes", these examples destroy their source materials and recreate favorable adaptations as designated

by market-forces, exploiting post-modernity and manipulating histories into more profitable experiential products.

Though it is easy to prescribe redeveloped landscapes as capitalist destructions of history, the temporal realities of historic place are much harder to discern. After all, what is the difference between historical vernacular form and historic fabric? The question sits at the core of place-based preservation efforts, particularly those looking to tourism as a means of economic development. Reproductions of architectural forms from the Golden Age of Coney Island's theme parks would appear crass given the physical scars of renewal still present across the shore. Indeed, the Neptune/Sixth project is in many ways the most architecturally honest development, designed not to reflect the forms of the amusement district nearby but the modernist high-rise projects immediately adjacent to it. And of the projects described in this thesis, the Childs Restaurant and Shore Theater rehabilitation projects come off as the most visually compelling, no doubt through their measured and respectful inclusion of legitimate historical fabric. These three projects manage to find a balance between wholesale redevelopment and historical pastiche, while observing a much broader period of historical significance that respects the realities of the neighborhood and its residents over the past century.

As was mentioned in the first pages of this research, Coney Island as a case study is valuable for its stubborn reluctance to conform to common tropes of neoliberal redevelopment. Despite the extent of its depression and value of its natural amenities, Coney Island has confounded classical models of gentrification. Though Bloomberg's redevelopment patterns often are anecdotally synonymous with rising rents, Coney Island's significant distance to Manhattan and the entrenchment of middle-class ethnic enclaves in South Brooklyn make creeping gentrification from the front lines in Brooklyn unlikely. Similarly, despite a longstanding narrative of luxury condos always inevitably on the brink of proliferating across the coast, much of the capital investment in Coney Island to date has been into public infrastructures and services. Throughout the rezoning

process, the community has proven resilient and engaged in the political processes at their disposal and is unlikely to face displacement without a fight. And if these recent trends indicating a quickening pace of development prove true, both the developers and residents will have the controversies of the rezoning fresh in their minds to inform their strategies and decisions, suggesting that a similarly heavy-handed approach from the government and private sector is unlikely to define the next phases of redevelopment.

With less than a decade having passed since the rezoning was implemented, there is still a dearth of information regarding its effects on the historic character of Coney Island and the wellbeing of its residents. Much of this research occupies a position of speculative inquiry as a result of this and must be qualified by an admitted lack of quantitative evidence on the effects of these redevelopment efforts on the community. As such, future research should concern itself with in-depth and on-the-ground qualitative assessments of community adaption, analyzing longitudinal changes in resident wellbeing, until enough time has passed and data collected to make more persuasive data-backed arguments regarding the rezoning as a tool for economic development. Given the volatile nature of urban processes, this research is time-sensitive and should be carefully monitored to help inform policymakers in real time as redevelopment progresses.

CONCLUSION

Figure 13: *Anomie 1991: Winged Victory (top)* **and 2009 Rezoning Rendering (bottom)**
Source: Mesches, 1991; NYC EDC, 2010

Arnold Mesches's Anomie 1991: Winged Victory depicts various landmarks and symbols of Coney Island superimposed on a blue-grey sky, the disembodied head of the Spook-a-Rama Cyclops looking off the frame as shadows of Black Hawk helicopters fly in the distance. Commenting on the Gulf War, Mesches projected the decaying imagery of Coney Island onto the decay of the nation he saw in pop culture and evolving military technologies. The meaning of this work is transformed, however, when placed adjacent to the NYCEDC's final press rendering of the 2009 rezoning Aerial of Beach at Night. The symbols of historic Coney Island are present there too, as is the eerie color palatte. Mesches' obfuscation of helicopters with the Luna Park façade is matched by the blurring of high-rises at the corners of the amusement district into the residential fabric behind, the lights of the amusements lighting only the faces of the structures and obscuring the urban form behind. History, permanence, and progress are malformed and masked.

While the future of Coney Island is not likely to be as dark as Mesches' prophetic imagery, the conclusions of this thesis reflect this ambiguous and tense relationship between past, present, and future and the role that the built environment plays in straddling across them. The Childs Restaurant and Shore Theater rehabilitation projects seem to have struck a compromise between these temporalities, representing history and progress in a contextually conscious way. The architectural form of the Neptune/Sixth project has similar respect for the nuances of Coney Island's past, choosing to reflect the reality of urban renewal as opposed to an idealized Golden Age. These insights stand in contrast to the historic imagery commoditized into iconography by market-driven misinterpretations of place in contemporary Coney Island, characterized by a liability-driven reductionism and avoidance of community dialogue and negotiation.

The crucial element that ties these examples together is the rezoning itself and the government that facilitates the power structures of contemporary urbanism and neoliberal markets. It is the state's role to mediate the economic forces that it has produced and protect its citizens from the negative effects of these power structures that operate far

beyond individual human control. The case of Coney Island demonstrates how the government plays an active role in formulating the character of historic places and as such must recognize that it is no longer solely the responsibility of individual communities. Within this understanding, the need for governments responsive to constituent concerns, demands, and negotiations grows in importance. Approaching urban problems with a place-based conceptual framework thus works to empower communities in an increasingly volatile world.
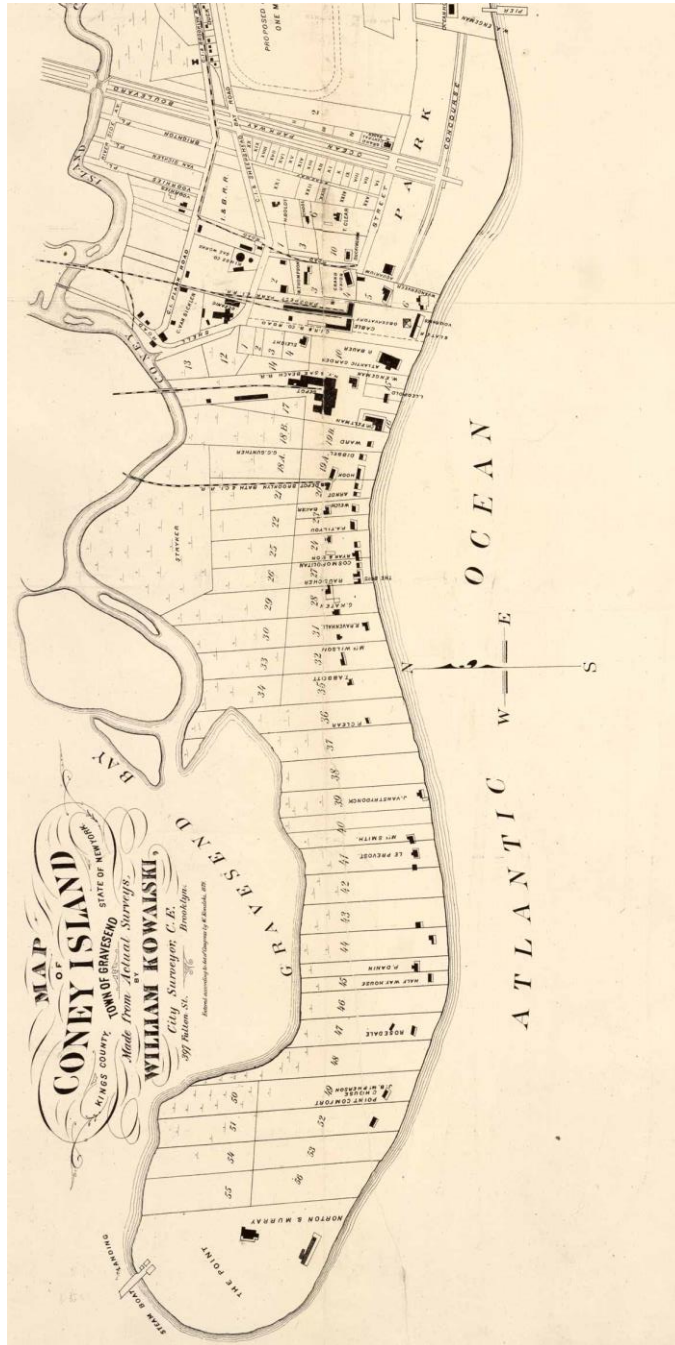
Historical Development of Urban Form in Coney Island

Figure 14: 1879 Survey Map of West Coney Island
1879 survey map of West Coney Island illustrating limited extent of development beyond the Ocean Avenue corridor.
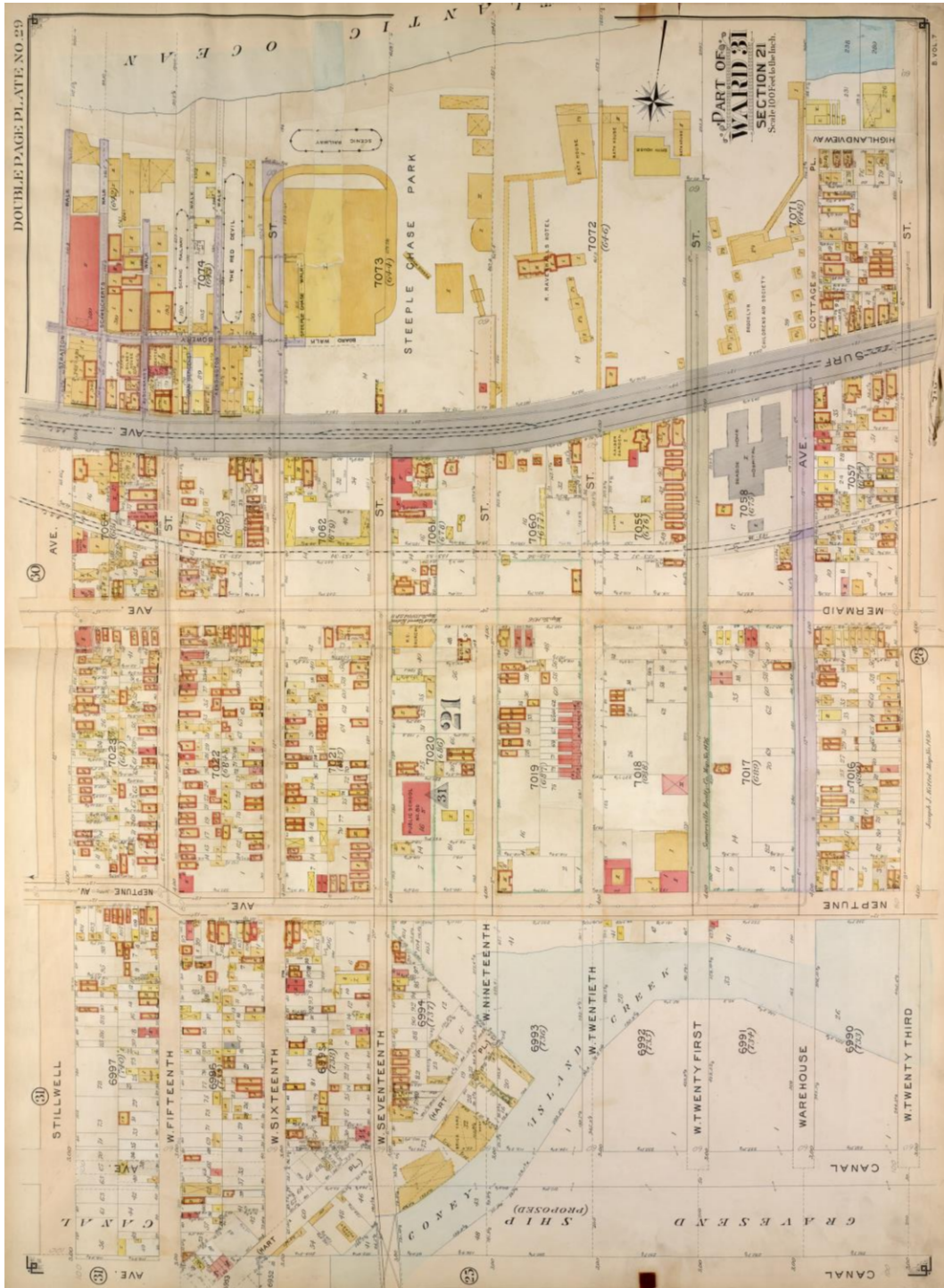*Source: Kowalski, 1897*

Figure 15: Coney Island Detail in 1907 Atlas of Brooklyn
Yellow indicates wooden structures, while pure red is brick and red outline is wood with masonry foundation.
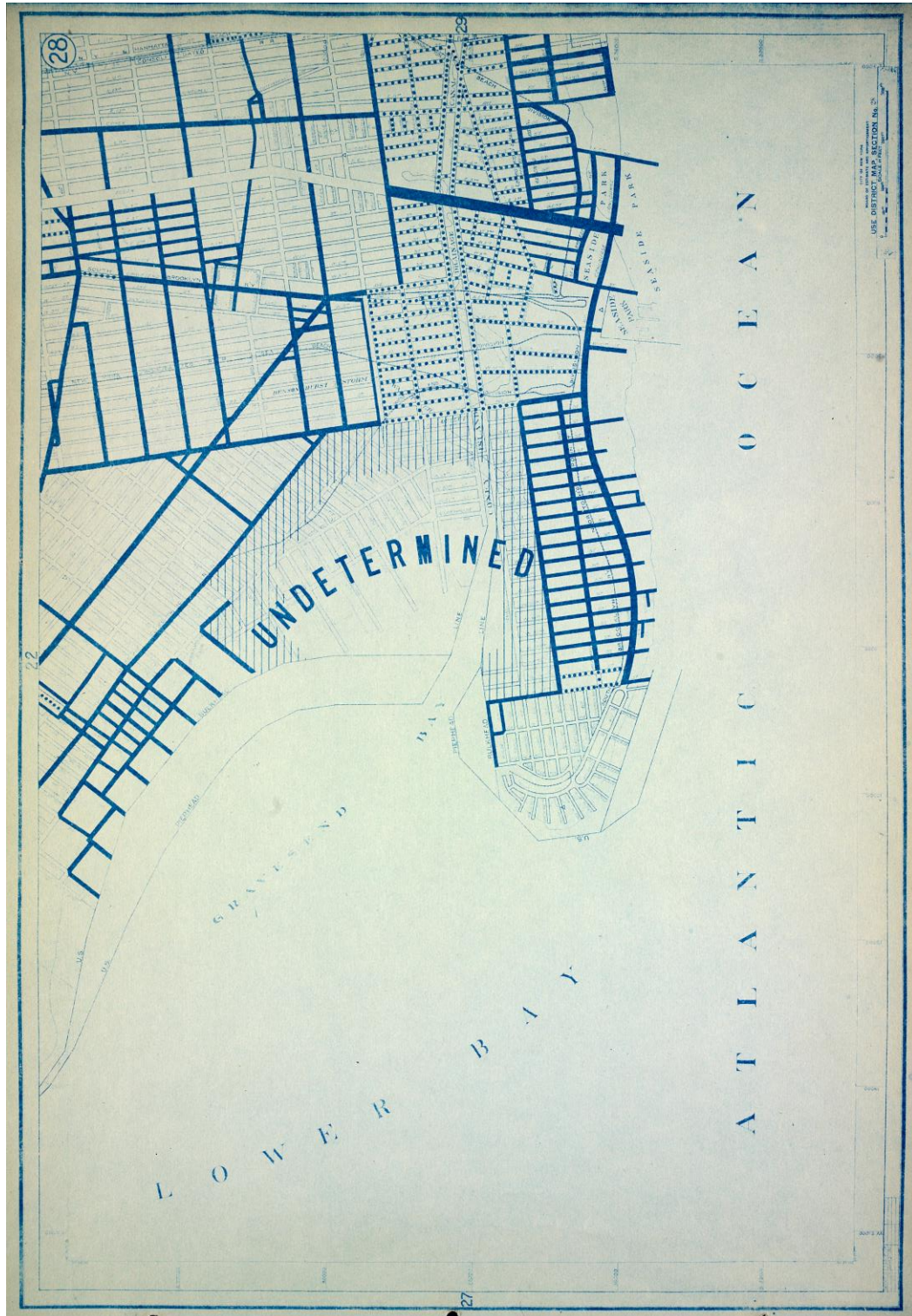*Source: Lionel, 1907*

Figure 16: 1916 Zoning Ordinance Map of Coney Island
Thick lines demarcate "business districts" while dotted lines demarcate "unrestricted districts".
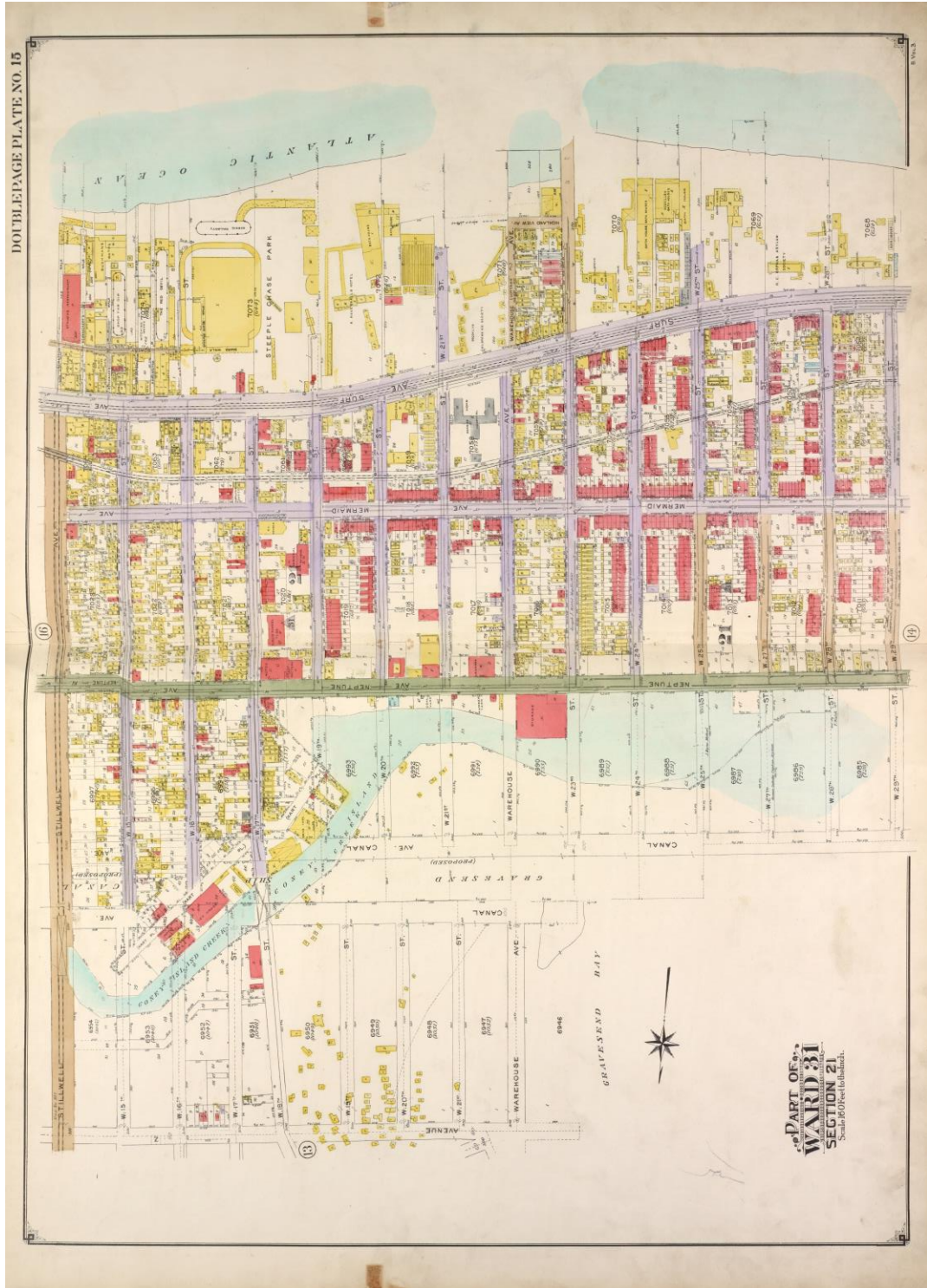*Source: Lionel, 1916*

Figure 17: Coney Island Detail in 1920 Atlas of Brooklyn
Several more blocks are visible to the west than Fig. 16, and there is no longer designation of wood
structures with masonry foundations.
Source: Lionel, 1920

Figure 18: 1951 Aerial Photograph of Coney Island
1951 aerial photograph of Coney Island showing its pre-renewal built form.
Source: Aero Service Corp, 1951

Figure 19: 1952 Map of General Improvements to Coney Island
1952 map of planned improvements to Coney Island; note the focus on sports-based recreation areas and
playgrounds and large block housing projects.
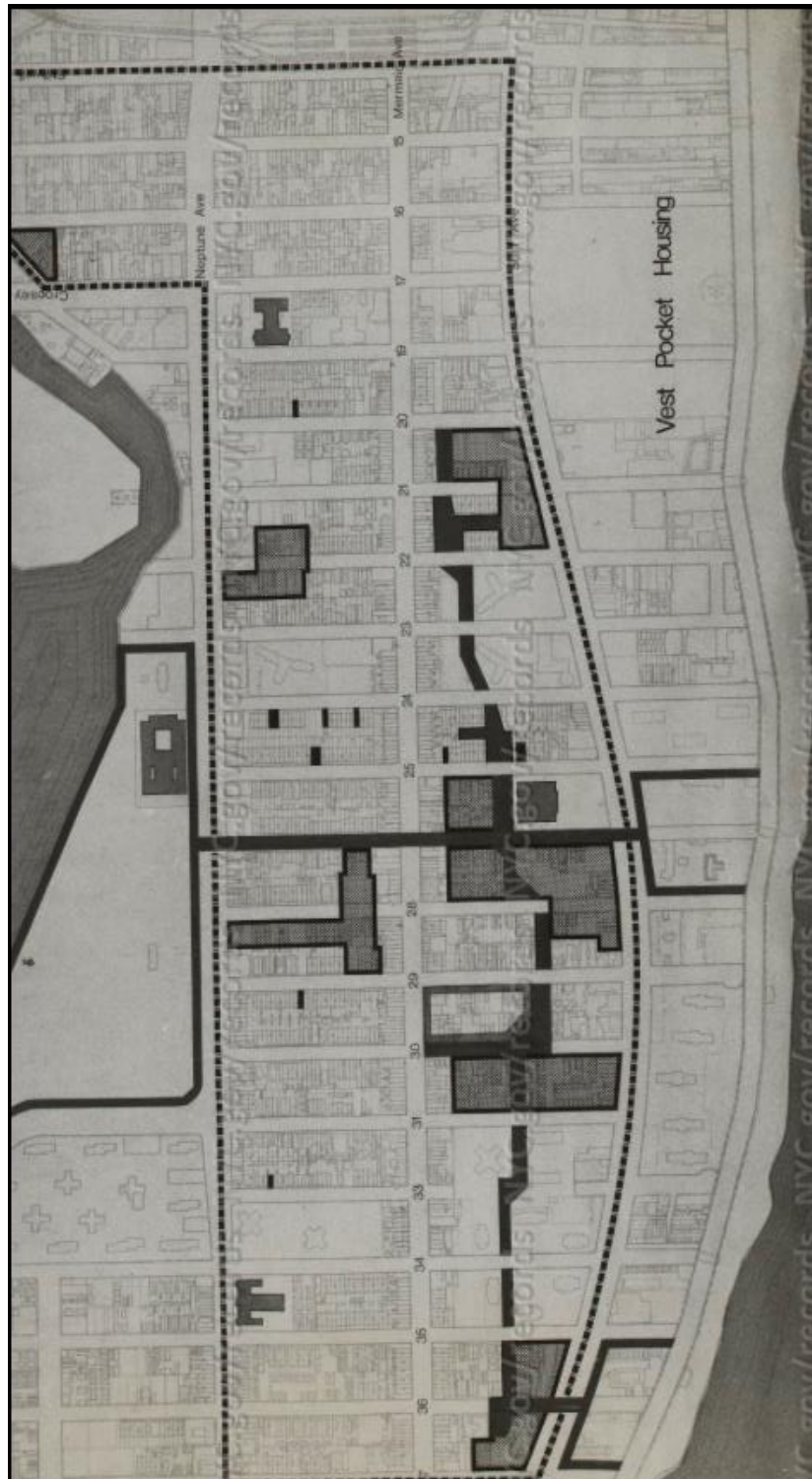*Source: NYC Dept of Parks & Recreation, 1952*

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Figure 20: Map of 1967 Vest Pocket Community Development Plan
Map of 1967 Vest Pocket Community Development Plan showing clearance sites (shaded blocks) and pedestrian plazas connecting proposed housing to recreational waterfronts (darkened blocks).
Source: Diagram, n.d.

Figure 21: 1994 Satellite Imagery of Coney Island
Note large superblock housing projects and vacant lots throughout the amusement district, including future
MCU Park site at center.
Source: Google Earth, 1994

Figure 22: 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning Illustration of Potential Uses
2009 Comprehensive Rezoning illustration of possible uses after redevelopment. Note the limited space zoned for amusement uses in blue, as well as the residential towers flanking the ballpark.
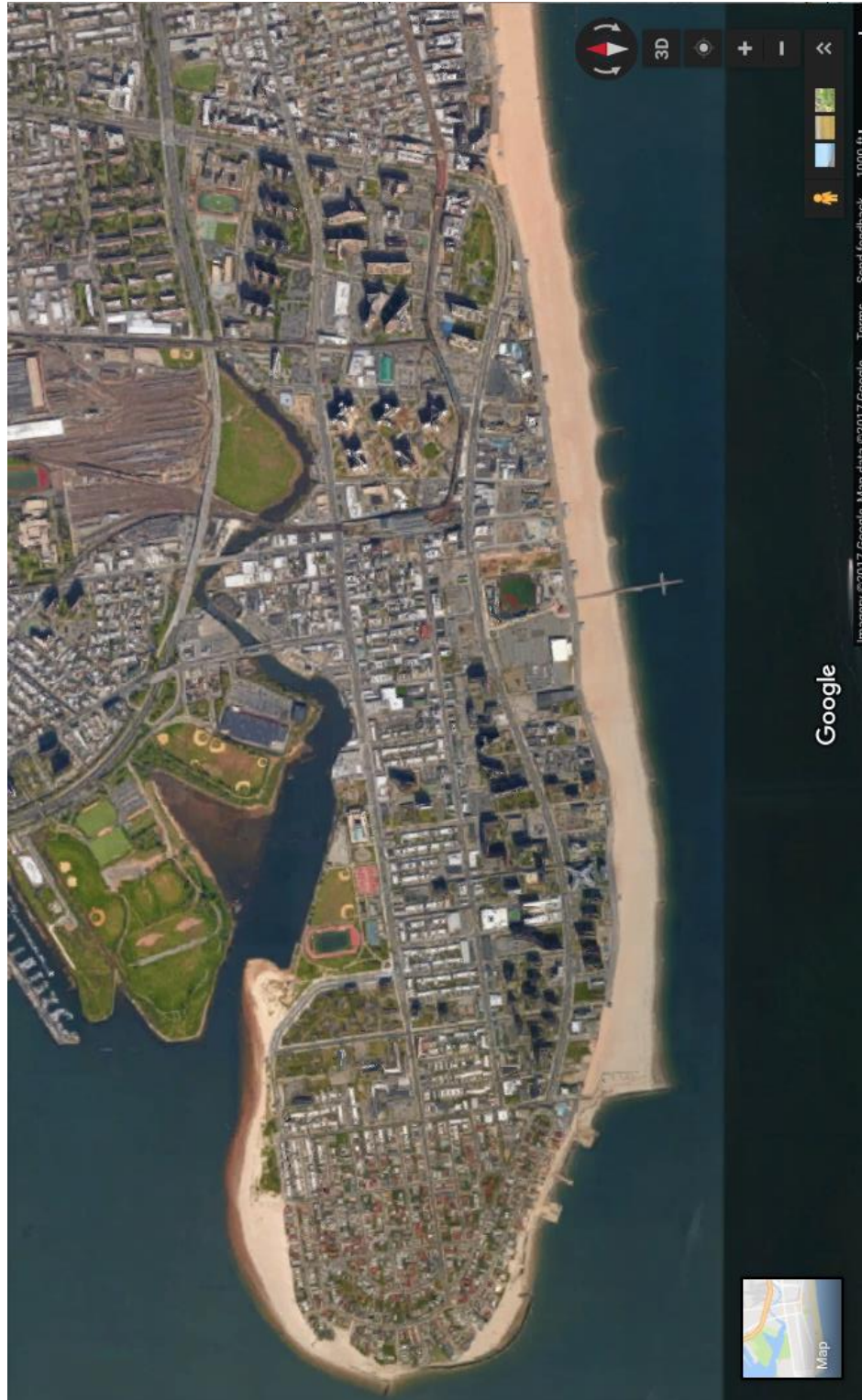*Source: NYC Dept of City Planning*

Figure 23: 2017 Satellite Imagery and 3D Modeling Composite of Coney Island
2017 satellite imagery and 3D model composite of contemporary urban form in Coney Island.
Source: Google Earth, 2017

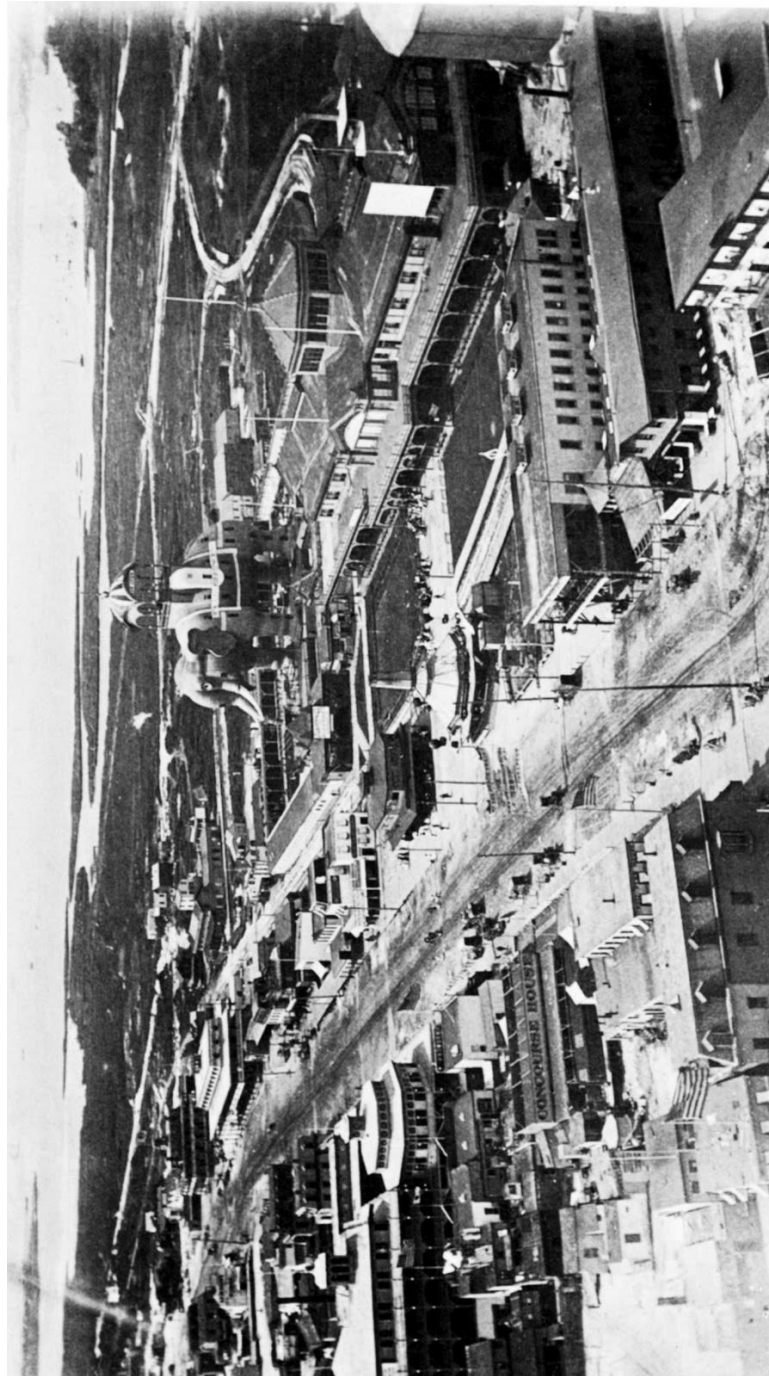Historical Development of Architectural Form in Coney Island

Figure 24: 1874-1896 Photograph of Development on Surf Avenue
Photograph of development at Surf Avenue and West 5th Street taken between 1876-1896, featuring the Elephant Hotel; note the loose density of Surf Avenue's urbanism.
Source: Brooklyn Before Now, 2011

Figure 25: 1940 Photograph of Central Amusement District
1940 photograph of central amusement district (top), featuring the Wonder Wheel at far right, Luna Park at top right, the Tornado roller coaster at center, and Shore Theater at top left; and detail (bottom) showing built form of residential and commercial architecture north of Surf Avenue.
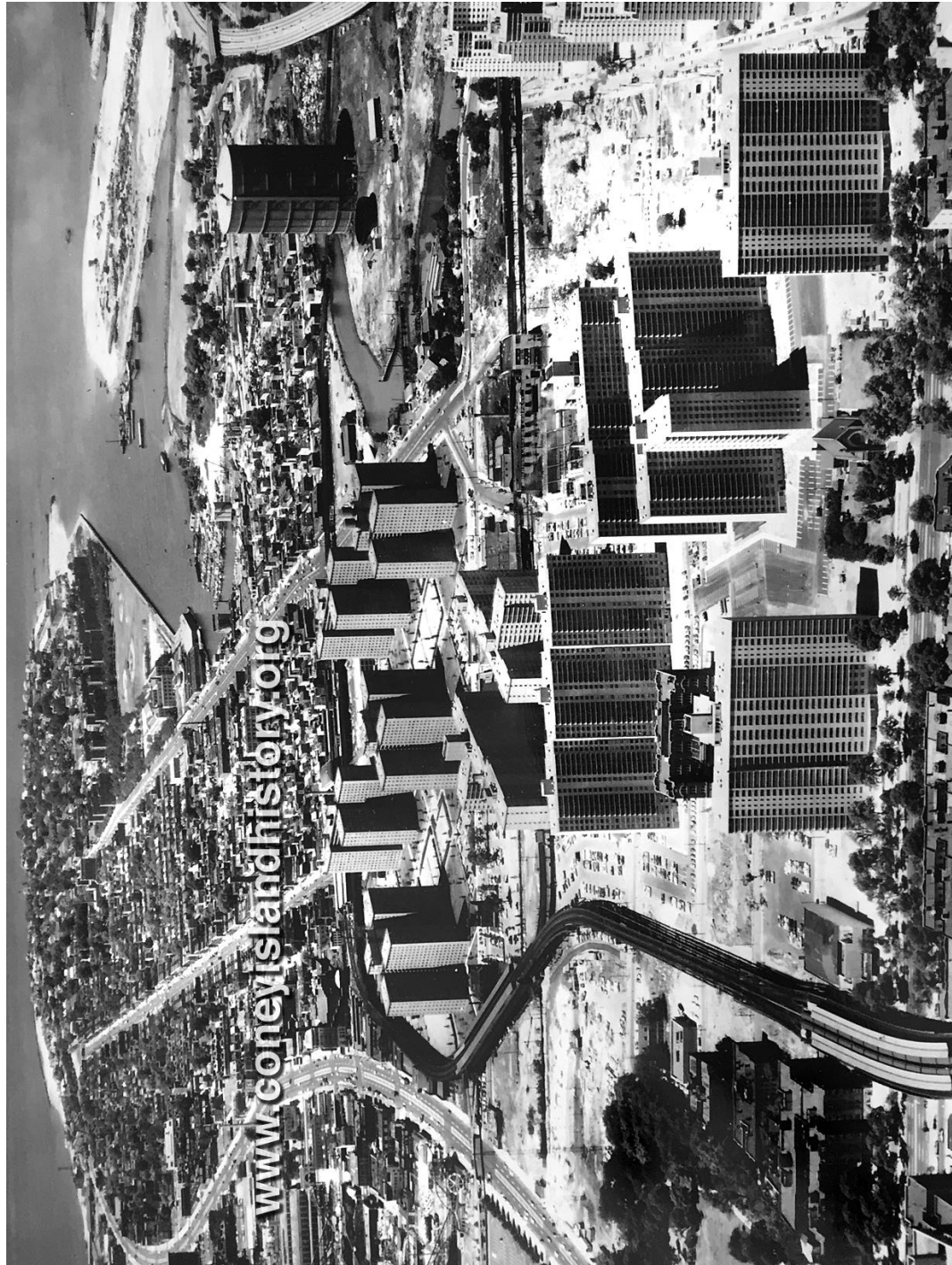*Source: NYC Dept of Parks and Recreation, 1940*

Figure 26: 1964 Photograph of Newly Constructed Trump Village
1964 photograph of newly constructed Trump Village with Luna Park housing complex just
behind; note dramatic change in lot size and architectural form compared to residential bungalows
at back.
Source: Denson, 2016
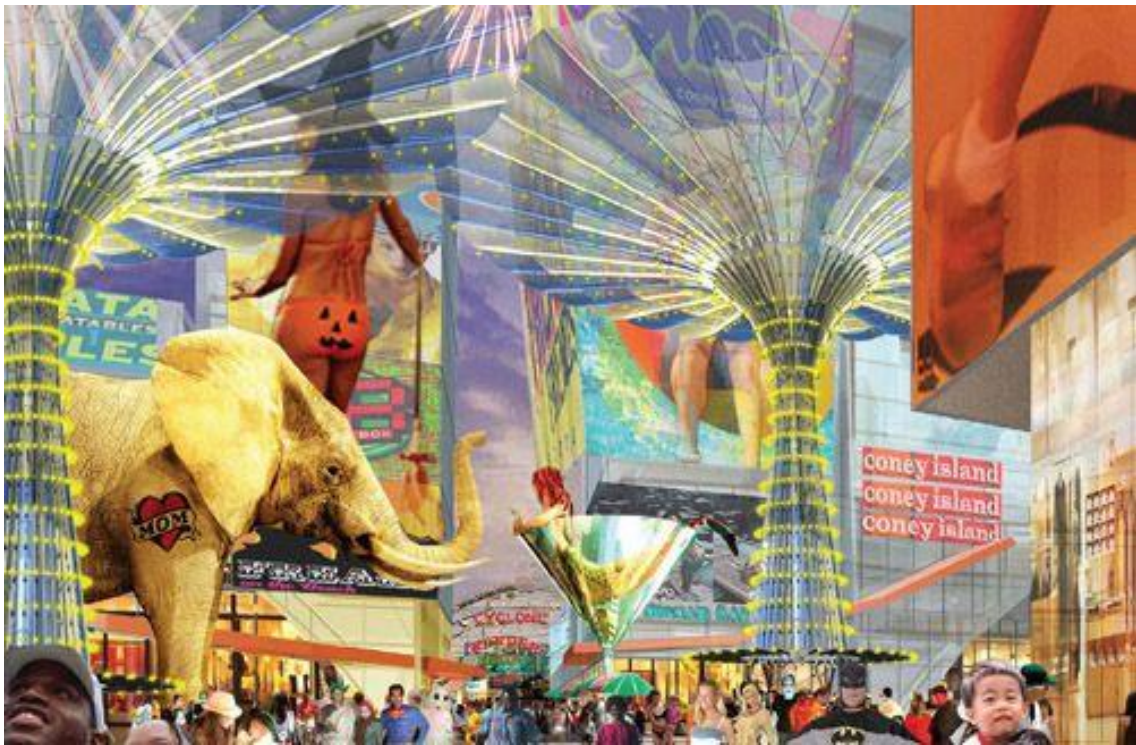
Figure 27: 2006 Thor Renderings of Entertainment District with Condos
2006 Thor renderings of entertainment district with condominium towers, accidentally leaked by architecture firm Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn while Thor was publically denying including condos in their plans. Note the dwarfing of the Wonder Wheel, Nathan's, and Parachute Tower by the towers (top) and Times Square-esque commercialism at street level (bottom), including costumed street performers.
Source: Stethacantus, 2014 and Robert, 2006

Figure 28: 2007 Thor Renderings of New Amusement-Centric Plan
2007 Thor renderings presenting new amusements-centric plan without condos, made by themed entertainment firm Thinkwell; note the more historically-conscious architecture within the amusement district contrasted with sterile hotel and time-share structures rising behind.
Source: Bagli, 2007

Figure 29: 2006 Master Plan Rendering by Arquitectonica
2006 master plan rendering by Miami-based Arquitectonica for NYC EDC, made at the same time as Thor's EEK renderings and illustrating Bloomberg's acceptance and prioritization of high-rise development west and north of amusement district and centrally in Thor's parcels.
Source: Arquitectonica, n.d.
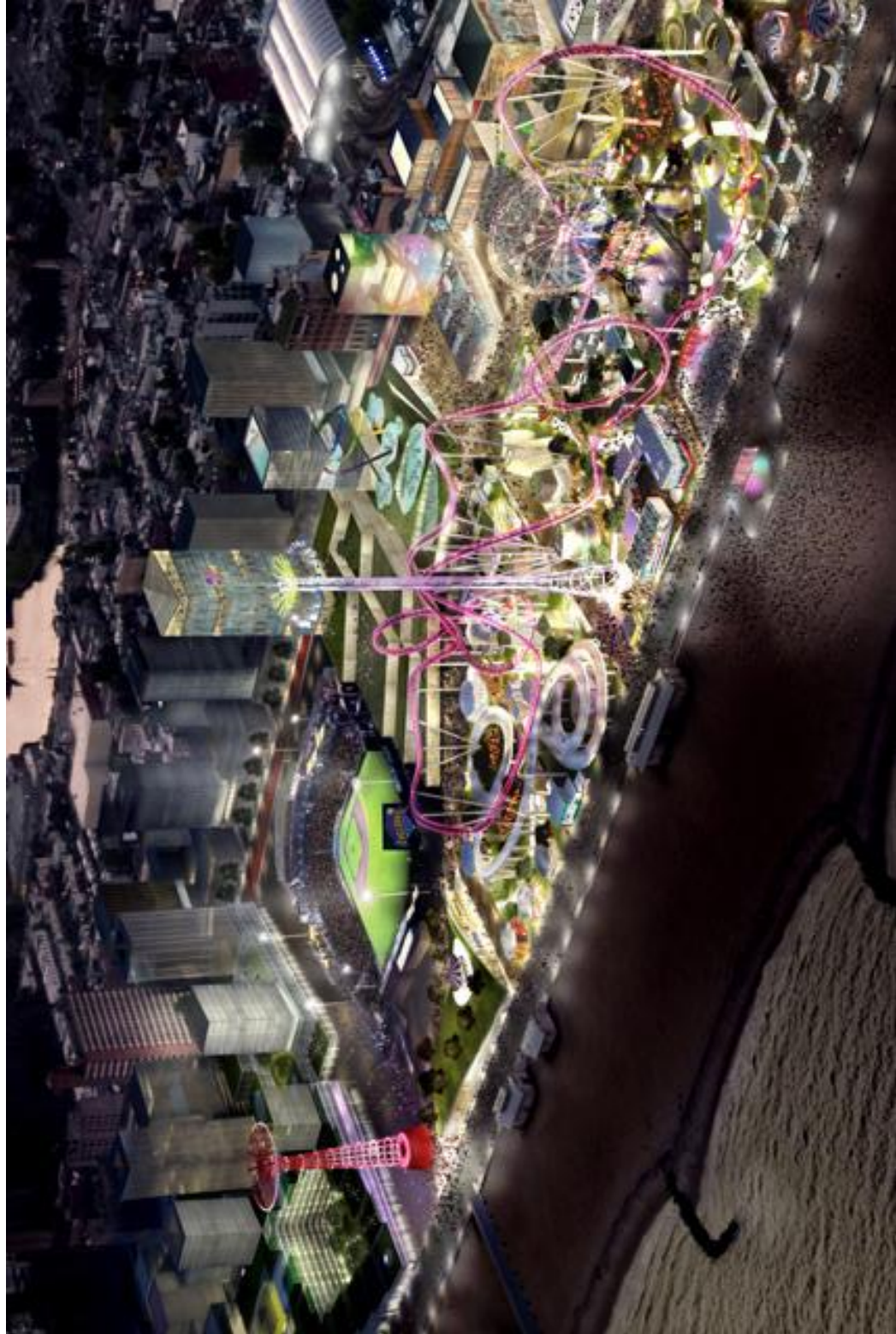
Figure 30: 2009 NYCEDC Rendering of Coney Island Comprehensive Rezoning
2009 rendering of Coney Island Rezoning Plan released by NYC EDC upon the plan's approval; note subdued and sterile architectural forms of Thor's central parcel and surrounding high-rise developments.
Source: Petro, 2014

Figure 31: 2016 Rendering of Red Apple Group's Ocean Dreams Project
2016 rendering of Red Apple Group's Ocean Dreams project, featuring mixed-use typology with boardwalk storefronts, three residential towers, and rooftop pools and green space.
Source: Cohen, 2017
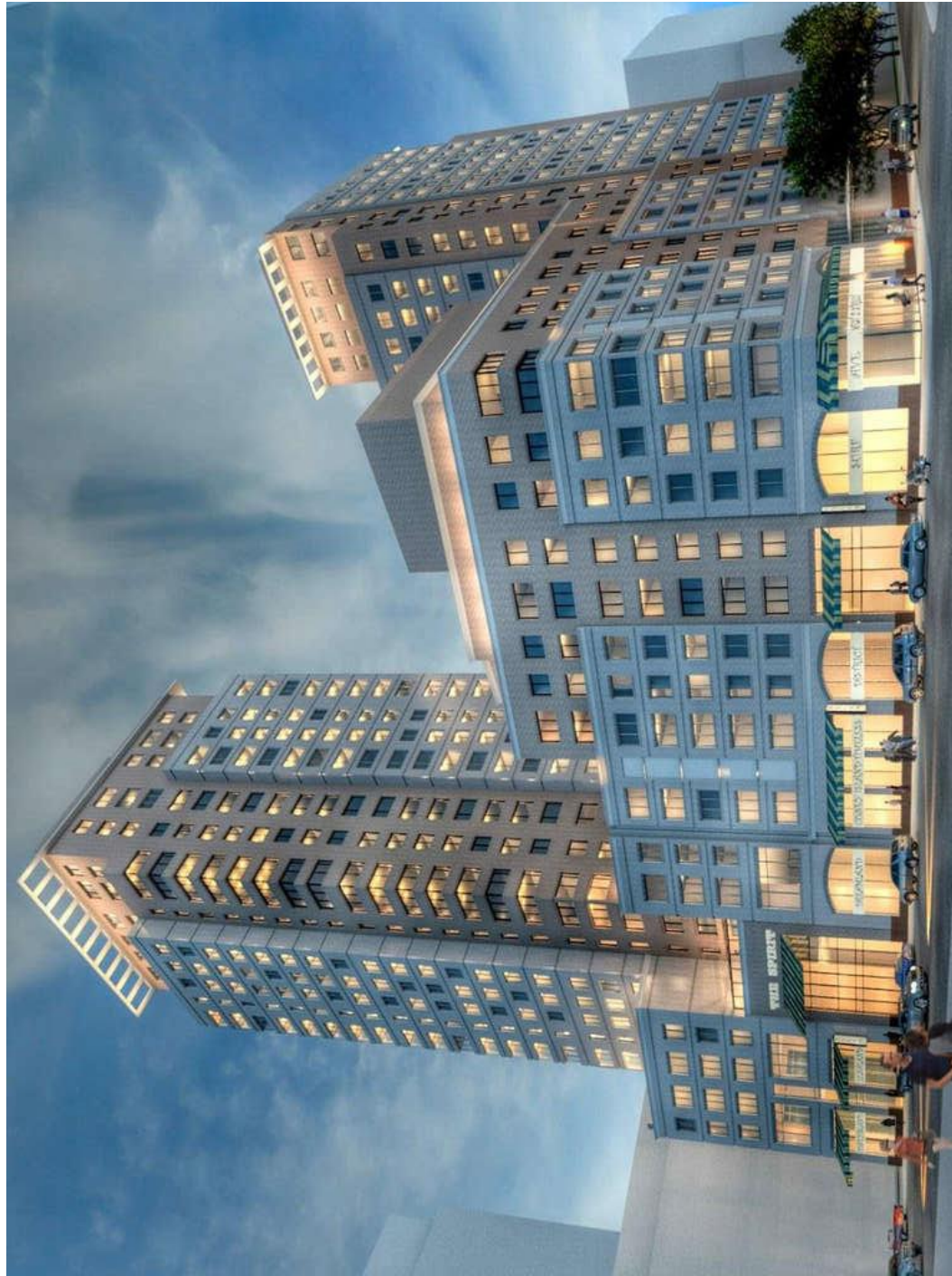
Figure 32: 2016 Rendering of Supportive Housing Project
2016 rendering of Georgica Green Ventures' and Concern for Independent Living's supportive housing project, featuring common contemporary faux-eclecticism of setbacks and façades obscuring a monolithic superstructure.
Source:Nonko, 2016

Figure 33: 2016 Rendering of Cammeby's Neptune/Sixth Project
2016 rendering of Cammeby International's Neptune/Sixth project; note the significant referentialism in architectural form to surrounding modernist public housing complexes and co-op high rises.
Source: Cornell, 2016

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