

a gateway to the neighborhood.

The final piece of the puzzle is across that waterfront. If people do stroll the Flushing River—even Muss’s Jim Jarosik is quick to acknowledge, “there’s no question there is currently an odor issue”—they are going to start looking at the other side, where the auto-body, construction-supply, and food-distribution businesses of Willets Point have resisted change for decades. To drive through the area today is to feel as if you have left New York—it is wild and ramshackle, defiantly homemade, and the probable site of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Valley of Ashes.

The Mets’ new and disappointingly retro-style stadium (why do we still mourn Ebbets Field?) will be built adjacent to Willets Point and is designed to meet up with a real neighborhood that might entice the game crowd to stick around. One side of the stadium abuts 126th Street, the west side of Willets Point, and a long Mets Museum structure will hold the street line.

Proposals for the site included an exposition center and a hotel. That bland directive is the

centerpiece of an ambitious and futuristic plan submitted to the city by the Queens Chamber of Commerce. Architect Charles Lauster, who designed the plan with the Newman Institute at Baruch College, expanded the target zone from the triangle to include the Mets’ stadium, its parking lots, and the open rail yards that U.S. Open fans must cross to get to the Tennis Center. “We are suggesting a deck be built over the rail yards”—just like the one planned for the Atlantic Yards—“and that a large building with an exposition center, a hotel, a shopping mall, and offices become this great spine that connects the Corona side to the Flushing side.” The whole rail-yard span would become a rampartlike building swooping past the Mets’ stadium and opening up the Point as parkland. This scheme is unlikely to happen—the city has its sights on Willets Point alone—but it has urban power that all the current Flushing renderings lack. In Flushing, the city should take a step into its own best future. Most of the city is already doing so. ■



**Bank of  
America Tower**  
(One Bryant Park)

**The Freedom Tower**  
(Ground Zero)

**Silvercup West**  
(Queens Waterfront)

**The Verdesian**  
(Battery Park City)

**The Hearst Building**  
(Midtown West)

**The New York  
Times Building**  
(Midtown West)