

GREATER NEW YORK

Block Party: What's in a Name?

The Columbia Street Waterfront District Is Taking on an Identity

PROPERTY A26

Musical Theater Honor Roll

HEARD & SCENE A27

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By Any Name, Columbia Street District Shows Life

It still serves as the active seaport for the Red Hook Container Terminal, the nearest subway station is a couple of miles away and the community is isolated from other neighborhoods by two expressways.

But the attraction of being near the East River is helping to draw new residents and businesses to the Columbia Street Waterfront District. Old-time residents still call it South Brooklyn, near Carroll Gardens and Red Hook, but Columbia Street Waterfront District is starting to take on an identity of its own.

Residential developers are transforming old industrial plants that sat vacant for 30 years into condominiums that are attracting artists and young families. Residents include Clarence Penn, a drummer who has worked with jazz musicians such as Grammy award winner's Michael Leonard Brecker and Maria Schneider.

"I always liked it here because I'm near the water," said Mr. Penn, who has lived in the area since 1993 and enjoys the proximity to Manhattan. "It's safe here and there's a great school district, but I would like to see more businesses come in."

In 1978, a plan adopted by the city promoted the development of many housing units within the

neighborhood between the 1980s and 1990s. In the late 1980s, loft factories were converted into condominiums on Tiffany Place, a street parallel to Columbia Street. Nothing else occurred until recently.

On Warren Street, the Columbia Commons, a 48-unit condominium that was formerly the Hamberger Christmas Display Factory, launched sales in May. It has one- to three-bedroom units ranging from \$420,000 to \$895,000.

Residents are doing their part, too, to promote change and are actively lobbying the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for greater access to the waterfront.

Residents also want water options to travel from Brooklyn to Manhattan, or to other areas of Brooklyn. "The ferry service is underutilized and we think that there is a market for it," said Craig Hammerman, district manager of Brooklyn Community Board 6. "People have reawakened to see the waterfront as a resource to move people and goods around."

The community has a mixture of three- to five-story row houses, brownstones, limestone and wood-frame houses. Manufacturing buildings are one to two stories, made of mostly cylinder brick. Buildings tend to be taller the



Remin Table for The Wall Street Journal (3)



Top, a newly opened playground at Pier 6 in Brooklyn Bridge Park looks out to Manhattan. The Columbia Street district has seen new condos open, such as Columbia Commons, above left. At right, the ferry pier.

farther away they are from the waterfront and closer to the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, reaching as high as eight stories.

After the conversion of some properties, the number of deteriorating factory buildings available to turn into residential space is declining. "There's not enough supply to meet the demand because the neighborhood is only three to four blocks wide," said William Ross, director of Halstead Property Development Marketing.

At the same time, more businesses are taking advantage of available retail space in the neighborhood. "There were very

few options in 1985; now there are plenty of options to eat, drink and shop," said Mr. Ross.

Longtime mom and pop vintage stores and boutiques remain as favorites, such as General Nightmare Antiques on Columbia Street, which sells used furniture dating back to the 1950s. But new choices are emerging, such as 5 Burro Café, a Mexican restaurant that has another location in Forest Hills.

The latest addition to the Columbia Street neighborhood has been Pier 6 of Brooklyn Bridge Park, which opened earlier this month, and offers playgrounds as well as ferry service to Governors

Island. Pier 1, another segment of the park located farther north from Columbia at Old Fulton Street, opened in March. When completed, the 85-acre park will stretch 1.3 miles along the East River.

Regina Myer, president of the Brooklyn Bridge Development Corp., which builds, operates and maintains Brooklyn Bridge Park, said the opening of Pier 6 brings unique benefits to the Columbia Street district.

"The [Red Hook] terminal is important to the region, but this is the first place we were able to build a major recreation node with direct waterfront access for the public," she said.