

# WATER STREET: A NEW APPROACH

TRANSFORMING LOWER MANHATTAN'S  
MODERN COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD



**ALLIANCE FOR DOWNTOWN NEW YORK**  
in collaboration with Starr Whitehouse and FXFOWLE





# WATER STREET VISION PLAN

## **This study was commissioned by Alliance for Downtown New York**

Robert R. Douglass  
*Chairman*

Elizabeth H. Berger  
*President*

Nicole LaRusso  
*Senior Vice President of Planning and  
Economic Development*

Christopher Reynolds  
*Assistant Vice President of Planning*

Gideon Zeus Friedman  
*Director of Research and Planning*

Daria Siegel  
*Director of Research and Planning*

Guillermo Stuart  
*Director of Infrastructure and Maintenance*

## **Under guidance from Water Street Study ad hoc Committee**

Harry Bridgwood \*  
*ad hoc Committee Chair  
Executive Vice President, New Water Street Corp.*

Michael Berg  
*Associate, Jones Lang LaSalle*

Maggie Boepple  
*Former President, Lower Manhattan Cultural  
Council*

Peg Breen  
*President, New York Landmarks Conservancy*

Anita Contini  
*Senior Vice President, CIT*

Stephen Diamond  
*Senior Corporate Counsel, Pfizer  
Resident*

Darin Early  
*Vice President, Jones Lang LaSalle*

Stephen Friedman\*  
*President, Pace University*

Earl Jackson  
*Associate Director, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill  
Resident*

Richard T. Kennedy \*  
*Senior Director, Cushman & Wakefield  
Resident*

Leslie Koch  
*President, Governors Island Preservation and  
Education Corporation*

Julie Menin\*  
*Chairperson, Manhattan Community Board 1*

Marco Pasanella  
*Owner, Pasanella and Son Vinters  
Resident*

Peter Poulakakos \*  
*Proprietor, Harry's Steak and Cafe  
Resident*

Peter Riguardi  
*President, New York Operations, Jones Lang LaSalle*

William C. Rudin \*  
*President, Rudin Management Company*

# Alliance for Downtown New York

Samantha Rudin  
*Associate, Rudin Management Company*

Michael Skidmore \*  
*President, Skidmore Associates  
Resident*

Kent M. Swig \*  
*President, Swig Equities*

Janell Vaughan  
*Vice President, General Growth Properties*

Anthony L. Watson \*  
*Chairman and CEO, Emblem Health*

Frederick Wunschel \*  
*Former President, American International  
Realty Corp.*

## **Designed and produced by Water Street Study Project Team**

### **Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners**

Stephen Whitehouse  
Laura Starr  
Jeffrey Poor  
Dana Waits  
Annie Weinmayr  
Nicole Vadja  
Victoria Mayer

### **FXFOWLE Architects**

Mark Strauss  
John Schuyler  
Jason Hsiao

### **Sam Schwartz Engineering**

Douglas Adams  
Harris Schectman  
Daniel Schack  
Jacob Mason

### **Karin Bacon Events**

Karin Bacon  
Victoria Anstead  
Kaarin Patterson

With  
JDF Realty  
L'Observatoire  
International  
Sylvia Harris

\* Denotes Alliance for Downtown New York Board Member



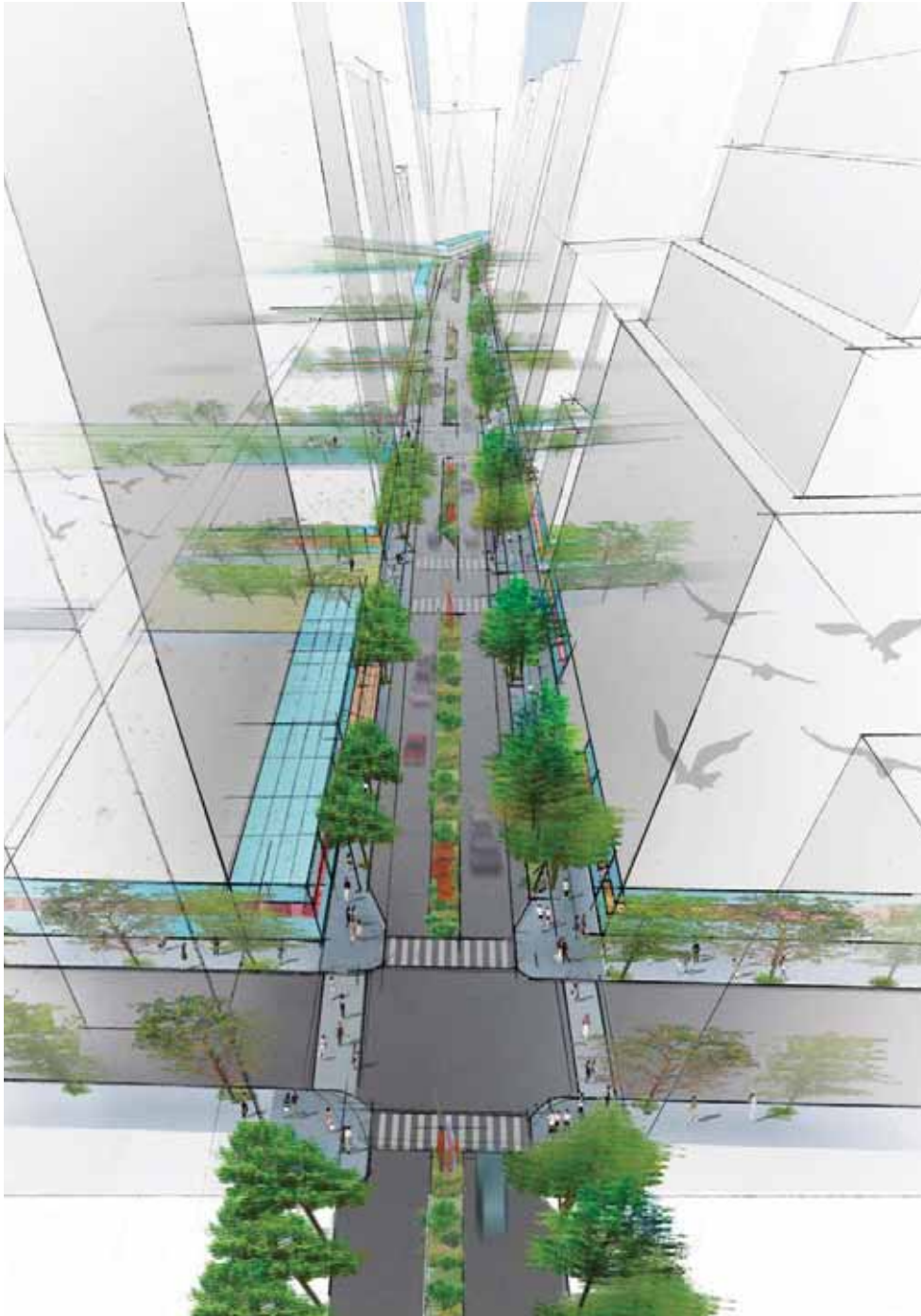
Views of Water Street today





*Views of Water Street today*





Aerial view of proposed vision for a new Water Street

# CONTENTS

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Why Water Street  
Why Now  
Challenges and Opportunities  
Creating a New Vision

## 12 ANCHOR TO ANCHOR

Street Configuration and Median  
Sidewalk Amenity Strip  
Gateways

## 22 WATER TO WATER

Street Trees  
Front Street  
Mannahatta Park

## 30 SPACE TO PLACE

Privately Owned Public Spaces  
Ground Floor Spaces

## 40 DAY TO NIGHT

Street Activity  
Programming  
Public Art  
Lighting  
Free WiFi

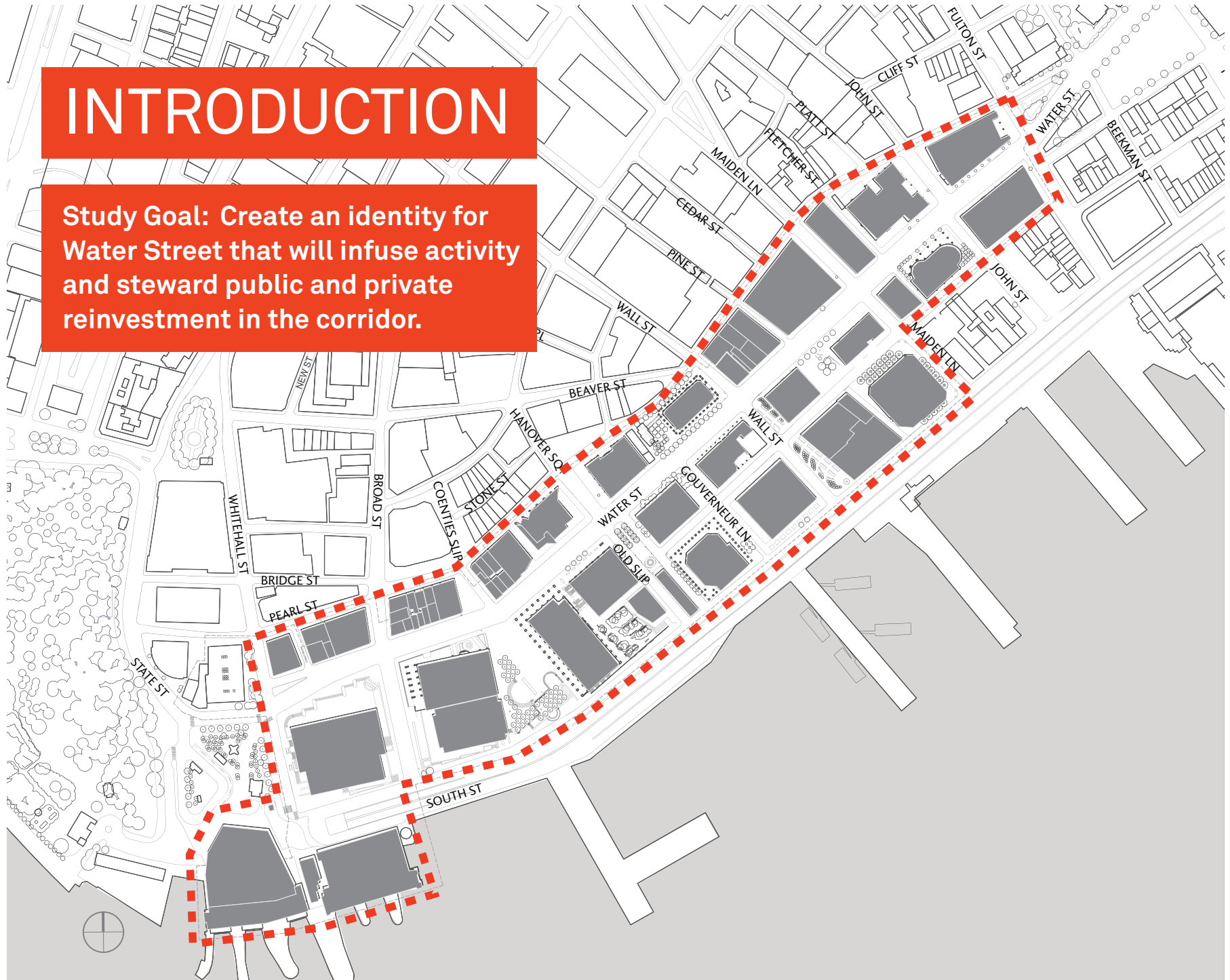
## 50 IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities  
Recommendations

## 56 OVERVIEW MAP

# INTRODUCTION

**Study Goal: Create an identity for Water Street that will infuse activity and steward public and private reinvestment in the corridor.**







View looking north on Water Street from Gouverneur Lane

## WHY WATER STREET?

Water Street is Lower Manhattan's most important commercial corridor. Running more than half a mile from Whitehall Street to Fulton Street, it is flanked by over 19 million square feet of Class A and Class B+ office space. It is home to some of Lower Manhattan's largest companies—including AIG, Standard & Poor's and Emblem Health—as well as countless small and mid-sized firms, which combined employ over 70,000 people.

Yet, despite being an important commercial subdistrict, Water Street exemplifies the oft-cited complaints about many downtowns across the country—predominantly commercial in use, deserted in the evenings and on weekends, lacking retail options and restaurants. The incongruous presence of loading docks and blank walls contributes to an underwhelming pedestrian experience, while many of the arcades and other privately owned public spaces known as POPS that proliferate along the street fall short of their intended purpose: to invite public use.

Despite high density and daytime population, Water Street lacks the vitality of other New York City commercial corridors because it fails to engage the public at the pedestrian level. Almost no one walks along Water Street for more than two consecutive blocks. The pedestrian traffic that exists moves primarily across the street, but the width and vehicular speeds make the crossing feel unsafe. There are few amenities or retail options available even in areas of high foot traffic. These conditions create an anonymous and uninviting environment along Water Street that undermines the appeal of this important corridor.

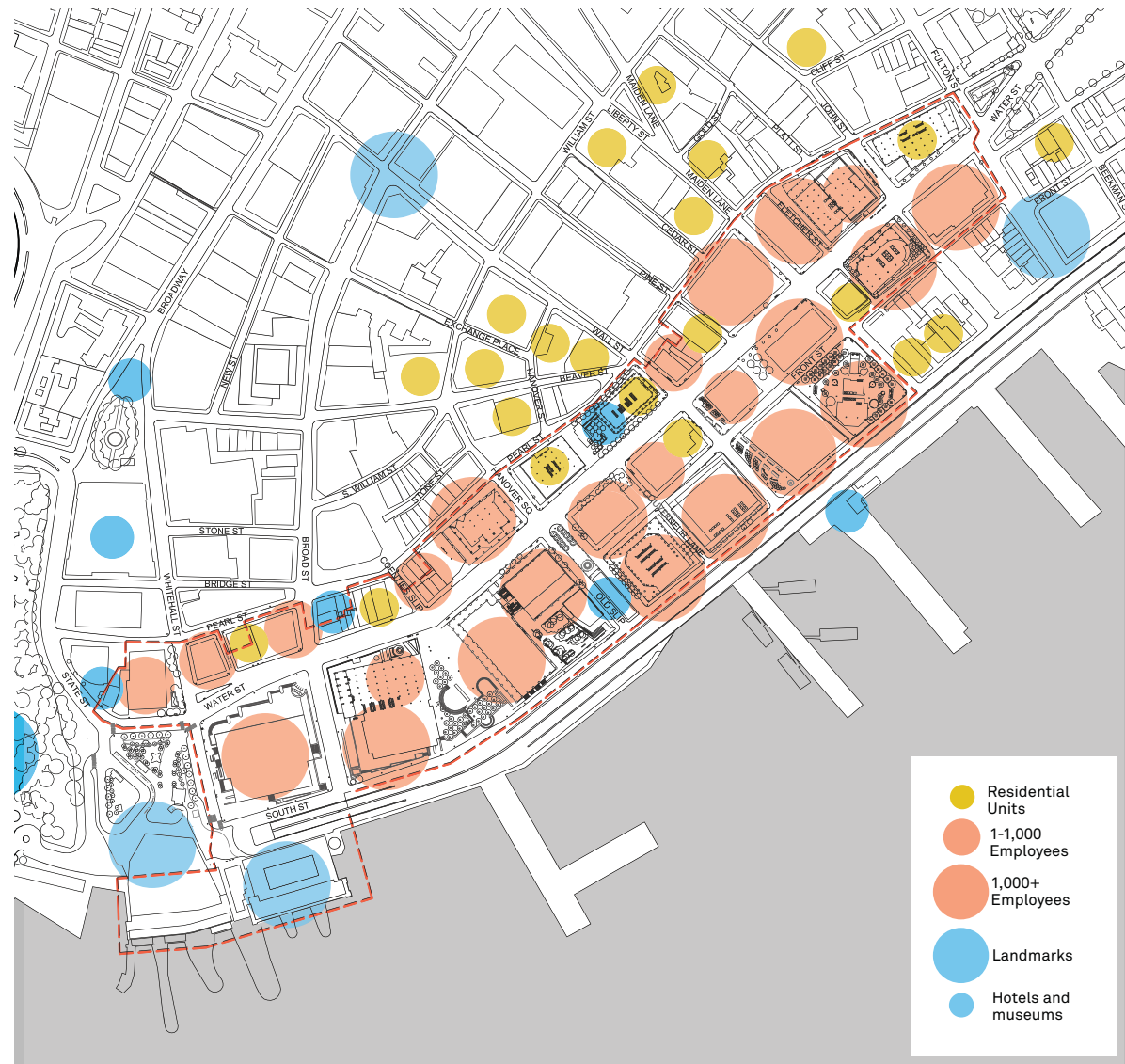
## WHY NOW?

The challenges of Water Street are in sharp relief to the scope of transformation taking place in the rest of Lower Manhattan. The revival of Stone Street as a lively restaurant row; the creation of a cobblestone pedestrian zone with high-end retail along Wall and Broad streets; the engaging new esplanade along the East River Waterfront; the reconstruction of Fulton Street and the rebuilding of the World Trade Center—all of these changes only highlight what Water Street is missing. There is concern that without improvements to the public realm, Water Street will not maintain its status as a premium business address at a moment when a significant amount of the corridor's space will be up for renewal in the next five years.

Yet, there is much that is right with Water Street. It is appreciated as the place to catch a cab Downtown and the easy way to get in and out of the district. There is great public transportation access as well, including subways, ferries and buses. New transit projects, including the 1st/2nd Avenue Select Bus Service in 2010 and, eventually the Second Avenue subway will enhance this advantage. Given its central location between the dynamic Financial District and a reinvigorated waterfront, the challenge is to redefine Water Street as an engaging commercial boulevard, which connects businesses that occupy the towers above to the exciting residential, retail and cultural developments taking shape in close proximity.

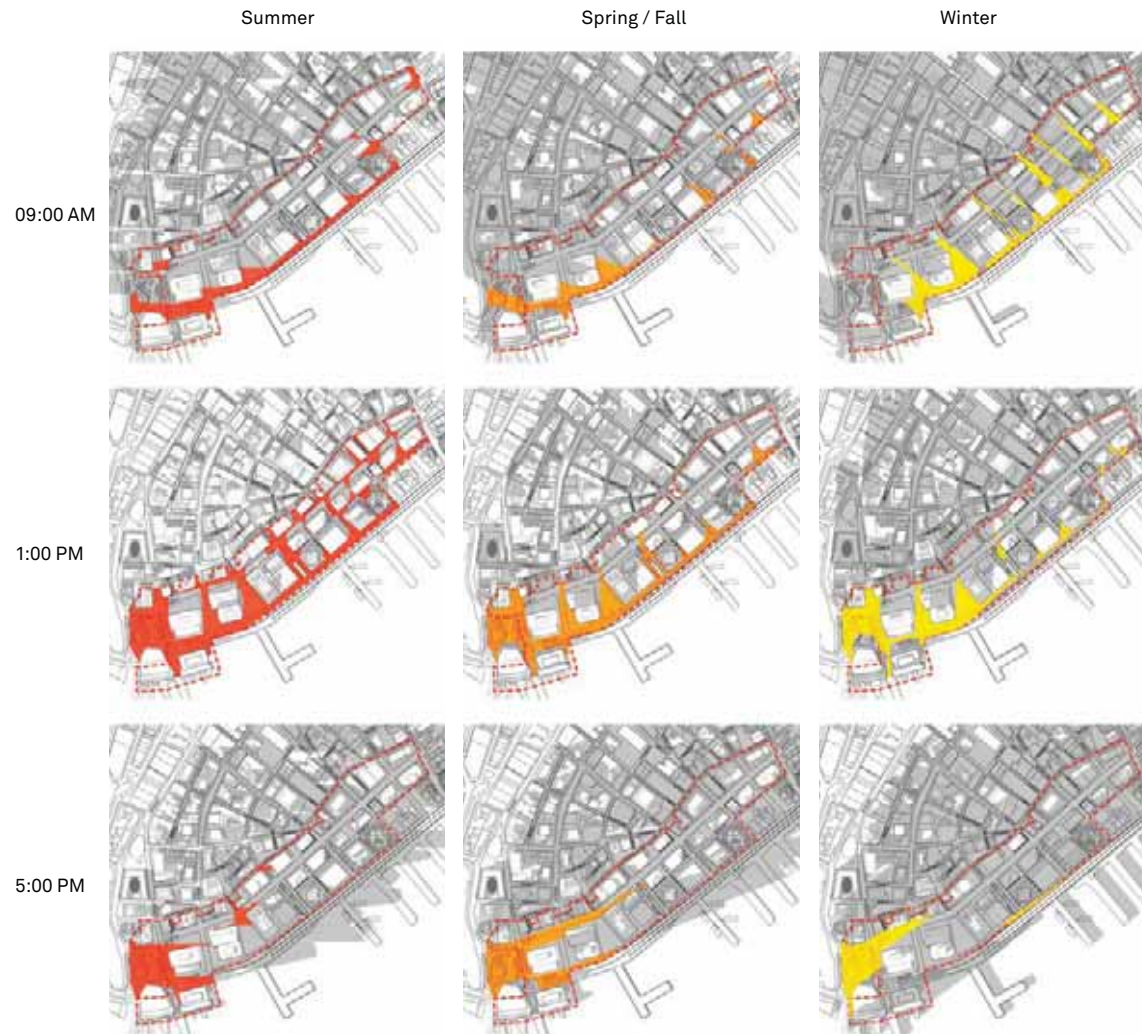
In October 2008, the Downtown Alliance convened an ad hoc Committee on Water Street, which included Lower Manhattan property owners, real estate brokers, arts presenters, small

# The challenge is to redefine Water Street as an engaging commercial boulevard.



Office buildings dominate Water Street, as shown above. A cluster of residential buildings have emerged around Wall Street.





*The sunniest locations along Water Street are within the slips on the east side of the street. During the winter there is very little sun throughout the area.*

There is too much public space where there is poor sun access and little pedestrian activity, but too little where people naturally congregate.


business owners, preservationists, residents, and Community Board members, to rethink Water Street for the 21st century. It was led by Harry Bridgwood, Executive Vice President of the New Water Street Corporation, owner of 55 Water Street, Manhattan's largest office building. [This report sets forth the Committee recommendations to sustain Water Street's competitiveness by improving the pedestrian level experience and integrating the corridor into the surrounding area.](#)

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

At the ground level, the problem on Water Street is clear: [the distribution of public space is too diffuse to support active street life](#). There is too much public space where there is poor sun access and little pedestrian activity, but too little where people naturally congregate. The roadbed is wider than necessary to accommodate the traffic volume. The arcades set ground floor activities back from the street, limiting options for attractive retail frontage. The proliferation of plazas makes the streetscape feel emptier than it actually is, obscuring retail uses or ignoring opportunities for them altogether. The lack of ground floor amenities and street life is a detriment to the area's appeal as a business address, and contributes nothing to Lower Manhattan's growing residential and tourist populations.

These challenges largely result from two initiatives in the early 1960s: the widening of Water Street and the inclusion of the plaza bonus in the City's Zoning Resolution. The street reconfiguration in 1962 created a new office corridor out of what for centuries had been a center of maritime activity.



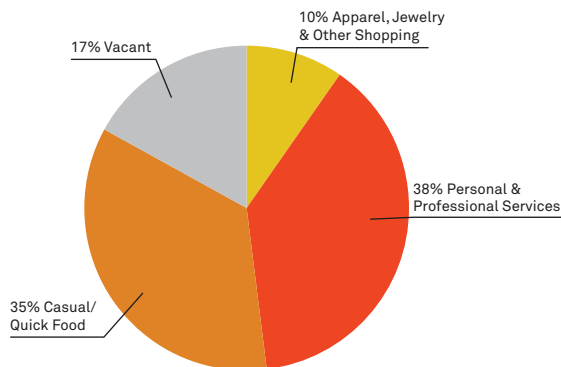
 Areas of diffuse public space



# The distribution of public space is too diffuse to support active and vibrant street life.



Above: Public space at Wall Street Plaza  
Below left: Pie chart of existing storefront uses on Water Street. The retail generally caters towards office workers looking for a quick lunch or professional service.  
Source: Downtown Alliance, August 2009



Water Street was widened to maximize vehicular access. However, the additional vehicle capacity exceeds actual traffic needs, often resulting in traffic above the speed limit and a street where pedestrians feel less safe crossing than they do on similarly wide thoroughfares elsewhere in the city.

Changes to the zoning code in 1961 have had an equally profound effect on the public realm. In an effort to compete with suburban office parks, cities across the country implemented new planning strategies to create more public space. In New York, the new code allowed an increase in building density in exchange for public plazas or arcades. The intention of POPS was to provide more public space to offset the density and scale of the buildings above, and between 1965 and 1987, twenty buildings were built with POPS on Water Street.

But the limitations of this approach soon became apparent. The concentration of POPS added so much empty space that now Water Street feels devoid of activity. Over the last decade, cities around the country have pursued new zoning strategies to reverse the impact. Here in New York, the Department of City Planning has wisely amended POPS regulations to limit their concentration and to require seating, landscaping and programming. These changes essentially reject the philosophy that created the Water Street of today—but they fall short of correcting the outcome.

“It is difficult to design a place that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

—William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

A more active, pedestrian-friendly setting is needed to sustain a competitive, 21st century business environment on Water Street. This requires redistributing and concentrating public space and rethinking how it is used. Water Street can be narrowed without impacting vehicular movement and the excess space can be repositioned to support much needed amenities. A median would create a new visual identity for Water Street and improve and calm traffic flow. A new median would also bring a human scale and much-needed greenery. Mannahatta Park, located on Wall Street between Water and South streets, can be expanded into an exciting multi-use space. Plazas and arcades can be filled in or redesigned to create a more engaging and connected public realm. And public art, events and other programming can bring these new places to life.



*Public officials and local stakeholders participated in four themed workshops to develop this vision for Water Street. Ideas were generated through interactive discussions and activities.*





Creating a competitive, 21st century business district on Water Street requires concentrating public space and rethinking how it is used.

## CREATING A NEW VISION FOR WATER STREET

The ad hoc Committee on Water Street selected Starr Whitehouse with FXFowle to carry out the study. The objective was an action plan that would achieve real change in the short term. For this reason, Starr Whitehouse developed an intensely collaborative, participatory approach which engaged a broad and diverse group of stakeholders on every major issue. **The goal of these recommendations is to create an identity for Water Street that will infuse activity and steward public and private reinvestment in the corridor. Four principles define this vision for a new Water Street:**

**Anchor to Anchor:** Rescale the street to create an iconic boulevard

**Water to Water:** Strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront

**Space to Place:** Realign public and ground-floor spaces to encourage street life

**Day to Night:** Extend the hours of activity along Water Street

This vision for a remade Water Street is dramatic but wholly achievable. It reflects the dreams, ambitions and requirements of the ad hoc Committee on Water Street, the Downtown Alliance and dozens of business, government and community stakeholders who participated in the process. **These recommendations are meant to inspire public and private action within the next five to ten years towards the fulfillment the Water Street imagined in 1961: a modern, competitive and animated commercial boulevard.**



A vision framework for Water Street



## THE NEW WATER STREET: DEFINING THE VISION

### ANCHOR TO ANCHOR:

Rescale the street to create an iconic boulevard

1. Maintain appropriate traffic flow and prioritize commercial curb access
2. Mark gateways at the street's northern and southern limits
3. Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and facilitate north-south movement
4. Reinforce connections to adjacent transportation modes



### WATER TO WATER:

Strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront

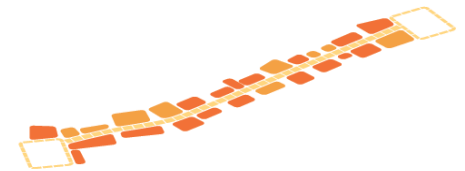
1. Create a physical and programmatic link between Water Street and the East River Waterfront
2. Improve sightlines between historic slips and the East River
3. Expand central open space to create an active, programmable destination
4. Integrate sustainable design into site improvements



### SPACE TO PLACE:

Realign public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life

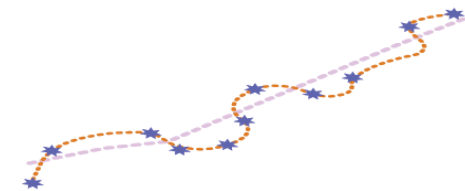
1. Modify zoning regulations to facilitate redesign and infill of POPS and arcades
2. Reconfigure ground-floor spaces to enable new uses
3. Entice retail uses that target workers and extend to residents and tourists
4. Accelerate transformation by incentivizing capital reinvestment



### DAY TO NIGHT:

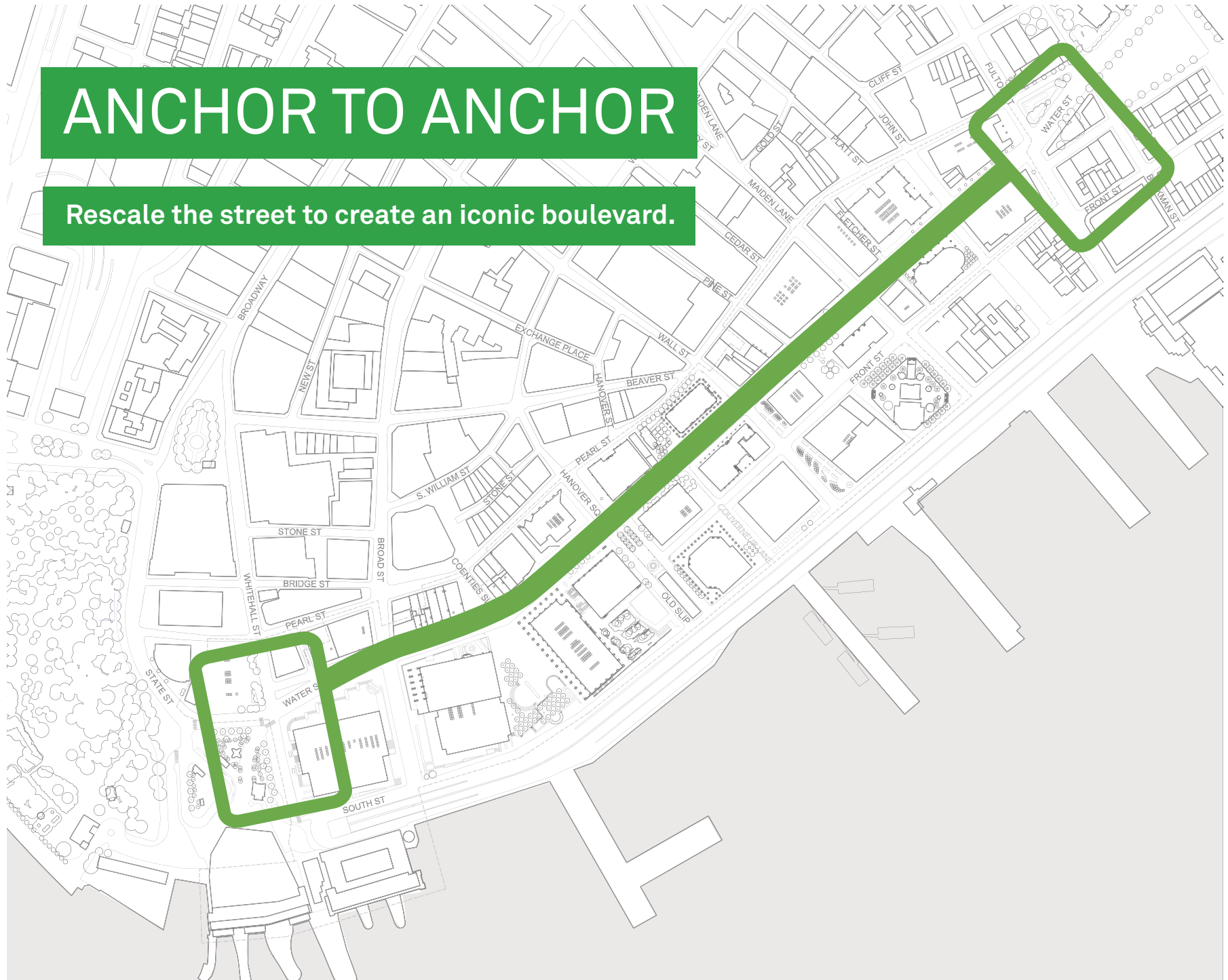
Extend the hours of activity along Water Street

1. Program open spaces with regular and seasonal events and public art
2. Illuminate pedestrian space and building facades
3. Provide publicly accessible Wi-Fi and other information technology



# ANCHOR TO ANCHOR

Rescale the street to create an iconic boulevard.





## OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain appropriate traffic flow and prioritize commercial curb access
2. Mark gateways at the street's northern and southern limits
3. Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and facilitate north-south movement
4. Reinforce connections from adjacent transportation modes

En route from the Battery to the Seaport, Water Street fulfills two critical functions: a vital commercial corridor and a link between two key Lower Manhattan nodes. Instead of an impressive boulevard, however, the street evokes a traditional windswept mid-century downtown. The street is too wide and its sterile, corporate atmosphere is generally unwelcoming to pedestrians.

These challenges can be addressed by **rescaling the street to create a more pedestrian-oriented boulevard that maintains appropriate traffic flow and curb access**. The street reconfiguration can also build a stronger link between the anchors at each end of Water Street.

*Clockwise from top left: Water Street looking north from Broad Street; South Street Seaport at Fulton Street; Staten Island Ferry Terminal at Whitehall Street; Water Street looking south from Fulton Street*

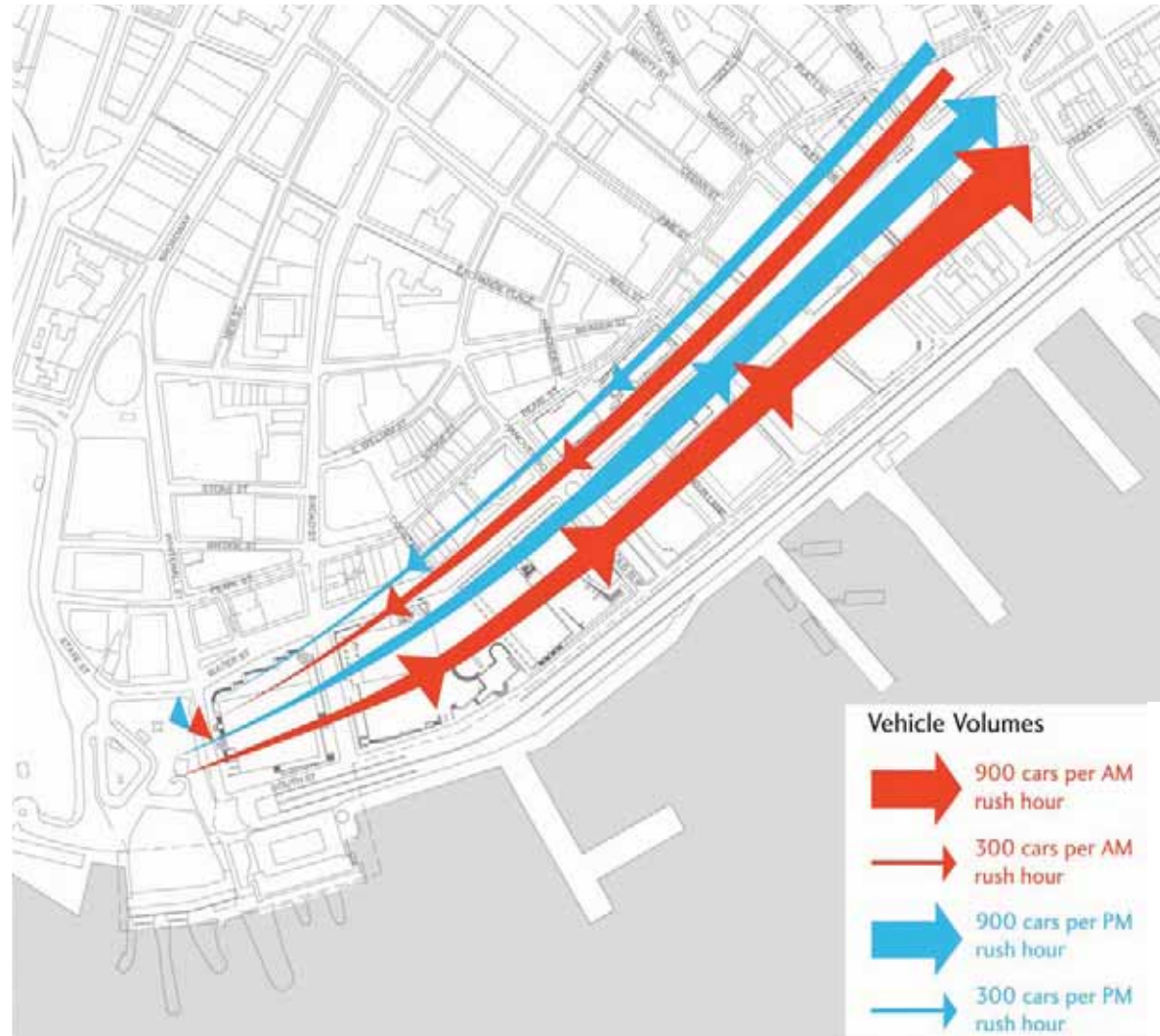


## STREET CONFIGURATION AND PLANTED MEDIAN

The key recommendation for transforming Water Street is to reallocate the roadway by narrowing the street from four standard lanes to two wide moving lanes. This presents the opportunity to add a planted median with turn-bays through the length of the street. **A median would reduce traffic speeds and provide pedestrian refuge while accommodating necessary curb access, the planned Select Bus Service and shared bike route.** Landscaping in the median could create a more attractive and inviting street designed to address the experience of pedestrians. The median would give Water Street an organizing design element that becomes the basis for a new street identity.

The traffic volume on Water Street simply does not require the four moving lanes that exist today. With the exception of the block between John and Fulton, two lanes of free-flowing traffic can handle the current volume. Analysis of rush hour trends on Water Street shows that **peak traffic volumes range from 154 to 944 vehicles per hour per direction, as shown on the right.** However, the potential traffic capacity for Water Street in its current configuration is about 1,570 vehicles per hour per direction, far in excess of existing vehicle volumes. **This suggests that all four travel lanes are not required.**

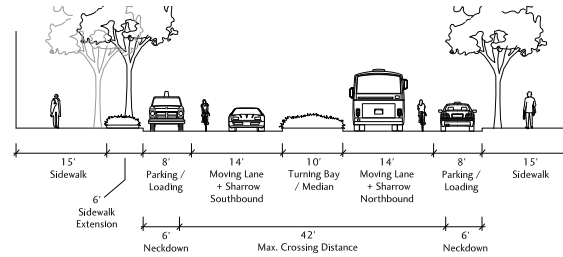
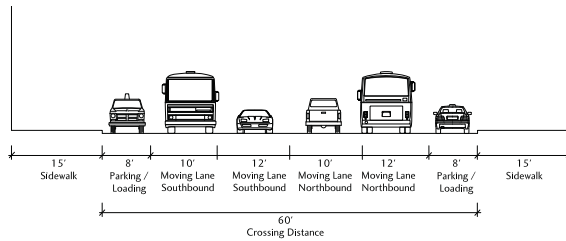
With consideration to these factors, the recommended design includes one 14-foot-wide lane of traffic in each direction plus left-hand turning bays at all critical intersections. Replacing the additional moving lanes with turning lanes creates an opportunity to install a 10-foot-wide



*Vehicle volumes are well below Water Street's capacity, indicating that four lanes are not necessary to maintain current traffic flow. Source of data: New York City Department of Transportation, 2004*

**The traffic volume on Water Street simply does not require the four moving lanes that exist today.**



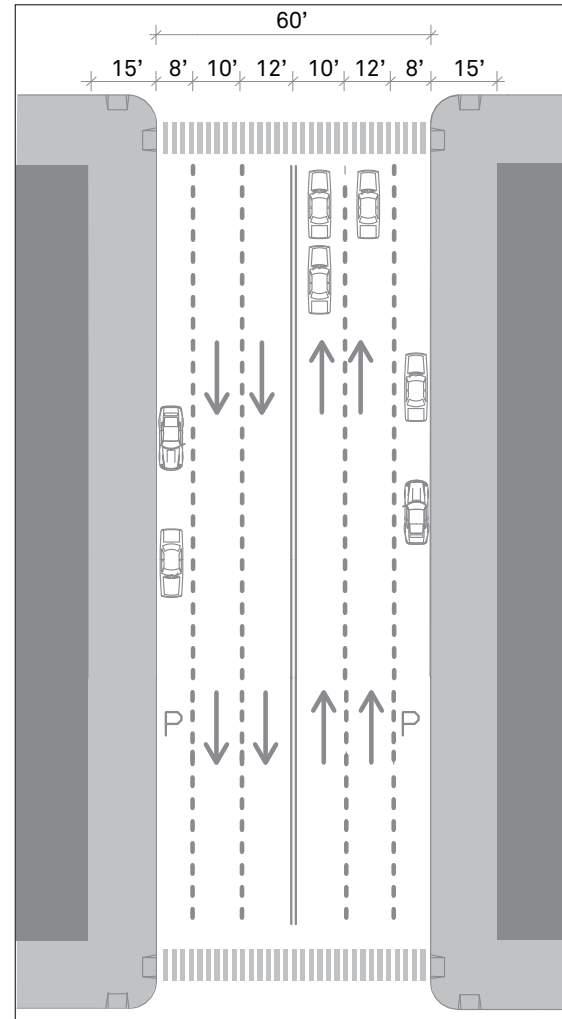


planted median in the captured spaces between turning zones. Curbside lanes are reserved for buses, loading and unloading, black cars and taxis. The extra-wide travel lane provides enough space to accommodate the constant starting and stopping of commercial uses and to paint “sharrows” adjacent to the curbside lane to guide cyclists. This type of demarcation creates space for bikers and raises awareness among drivers of potential bike activity.

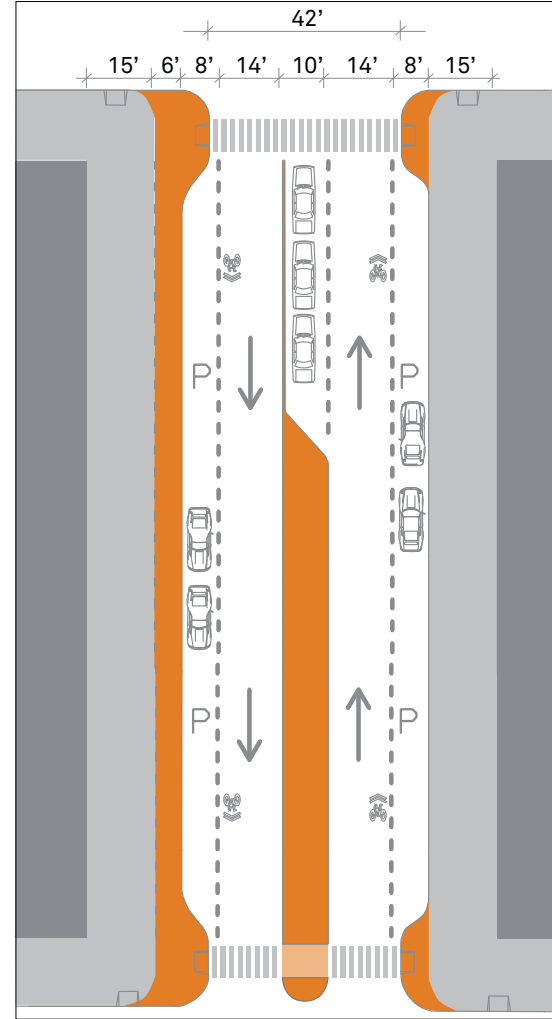
The reallocation of the roadway can establish a new identity for Water Street, heightening pedestrian safety and providing new green space while maintaining traffic mobility.

## STREET CONFIGURATION GOALS

1. Maintain traffic flow
2. Prioritize curb access for vehicle loading and unloading
3. Install traffic calming measures
4. Reallocate public space
5. Reinforce new street identity



Existing street configuration



Proposed street configuration



*Proposed streetscape design for Water Street and Old Slip*

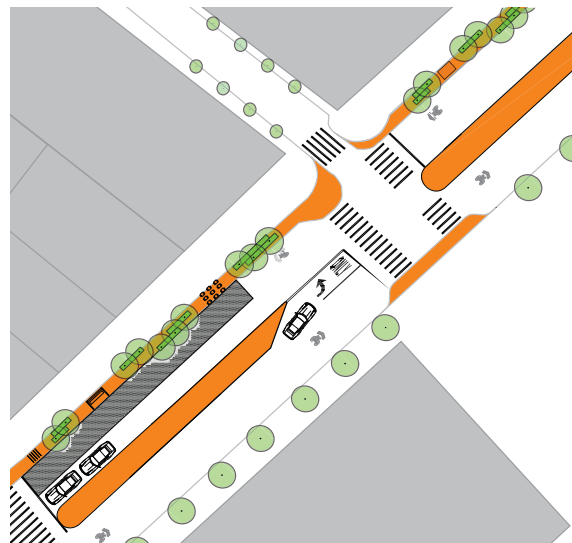
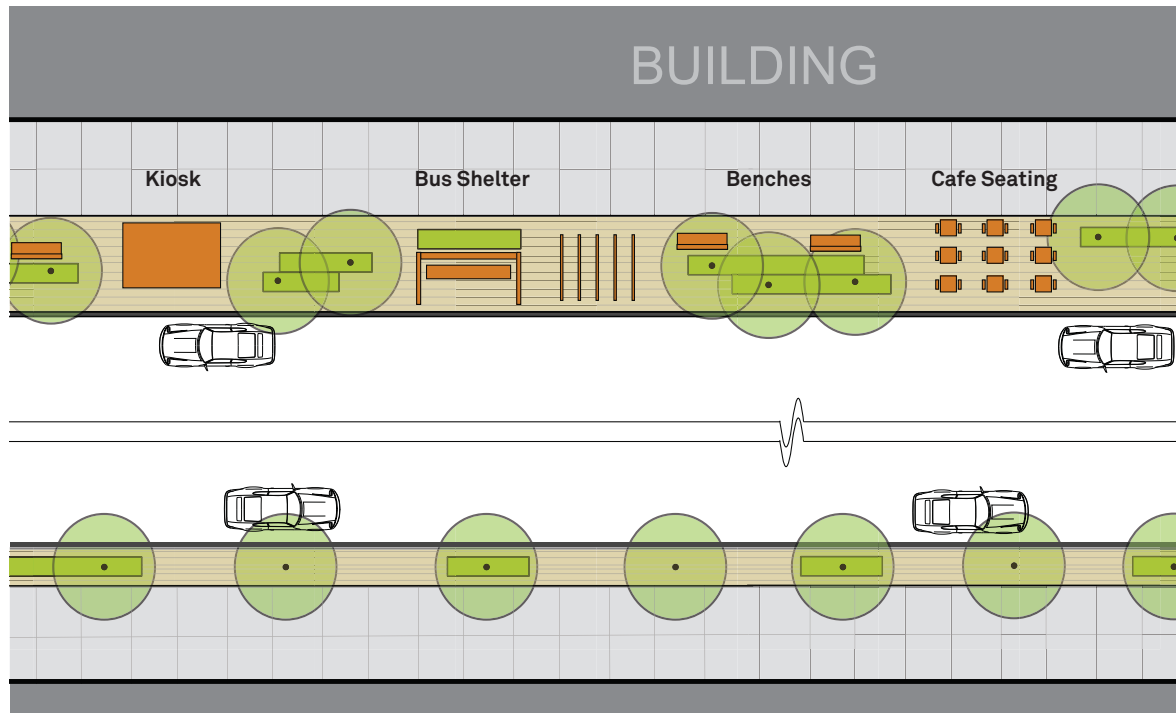
The reallocation of public space can establish a new identity for Water Street.



*Existing conditions at Water Street and Old Slip*



*In re-imagining Water Street, the Design Workshop participants were inspired by images of Park Avenue, as shown above*



The 10-foot amenity strip on the west side of the street allow spaces for seating, kiosks, bus shelters and planting. A single row of trees line the east side of the street. Top to bottom: Prototypical sidewalk plans; Plan of Water Street at Pine Street.

## AMENITY STRIP

To complement the median and take full advantage of the new space generated by the lane reduction, a six-foot sidewalk extension should be added on the west side of Water Street. Including four feet from the existing side walk, this extension allows a 10-foot amenity strip for café seating, benches, and bike racks. And it offers an opportunity to address the enduring scarcity and poor condition of trees on Water Street by creating generous soil zones for improved root growth in locations unimpeded by infrastructure. A 10-foot soil zone provides space for dense clusters of trees and sidewalk plantings at available locations; the east side would have a continuous five-foot soil zone, wherever possible, for a single row of trees. The design of these soil

zones could yield many environmental benefits. In addition to sustaining healthy trees, the increased permeable surface area and subsurface soil volume will reduce stormwater runoff.

The west side of the street provides opportune conditions for an animated sidewalk extension owing to its ample sunlight and smaller storefronts, more conducive to attracting ground-floor retail and cafés. Combined with the median and corner neckdowns, the sidewalk extension reduces the crossing distance from 59 feet to as little as 42 feet. With such amenities Water Street can become narrower, greener, and more engaging to pedestrians.

## AMENITY STRIP GOALS

1. Additional sidewalk space
2. Ten-foot soil zone for stormwater management and clusters of healthy trees
3. Narrower street width to prioritize pedestrians
4. Pedestrian space with ample sun exposure





*Proposed amenity strip between John Street and Fletcher Street*

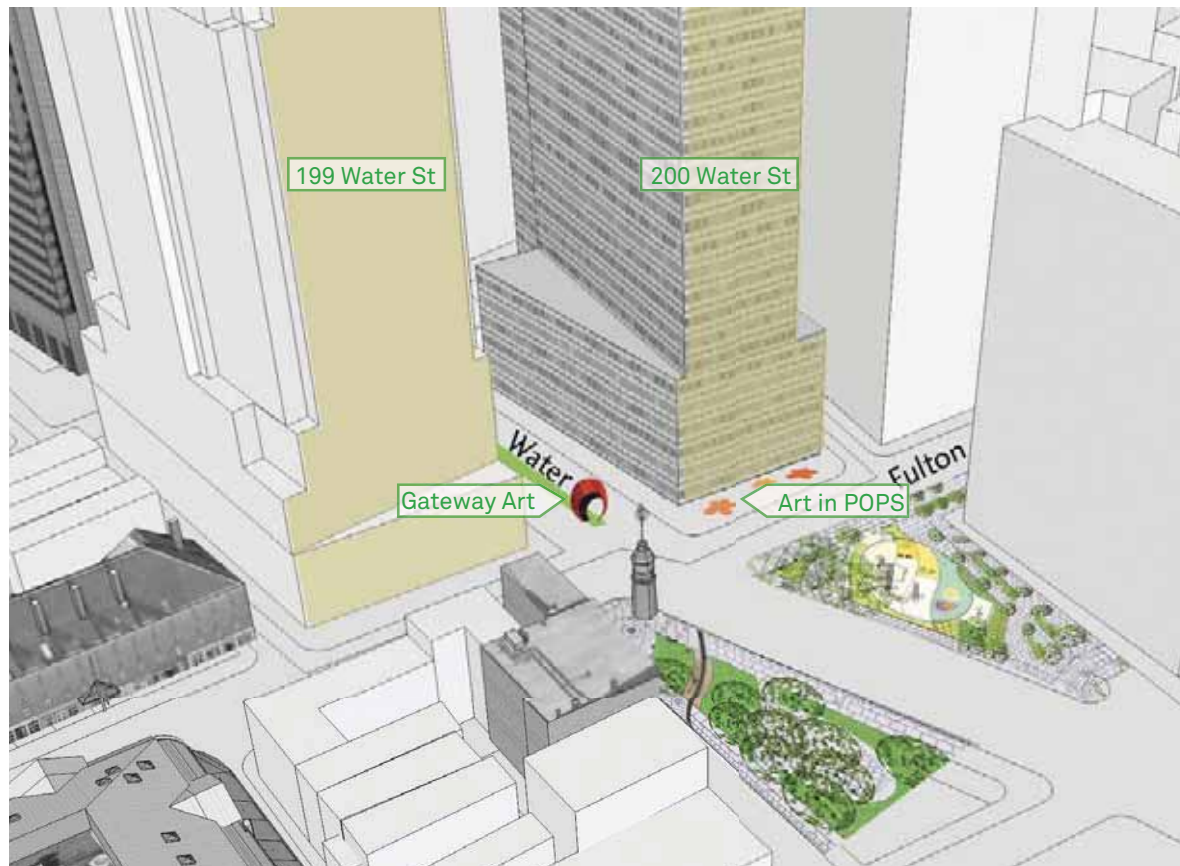
Water Street can become narrower, greener, and more engaging to pedestrians.



*Existing conditions at John and Fletcher Streets*



*Inspiration from the Via Veneto, Italy*



*The drastic scale of buildings on the south side of Fulton Street serves as a dramatic portal onto Water Street; engaging public art will further signify the start of the commercial boulevard and draw visitors down the street*



*Public art precedents, from left to right: Tony Cragg, Taipei, Taiwan; Roxy Paine, Madison Square Park, NY*

## GATEWAYS: FULTON STREET

Water Street is a direct and obvious route from the Staten Island Ferry and Battery Park to the Seaport and Front Street, yet few people make this connection. Reinforcing gateways at these distinctly Lower Manhattan destinations can drive foot traffic along a renewed Water Street. This can also lessen the perceived distance between these two centers of activity, encouraging more movement between them. **Redefining Water Street to engage these gateways will strengthen pedestrian connectivity and help define an important corridor in Lower Manhattan.**

Fulton Street, with the South Street Seaport at its terminus, serves as the northern gateway of Water Street. Over 20,000 people cross this intersection daily while commuting to work, visiting the Seaport, or returning home to nearby residential buildings. The intersection is marked by a sharp break in architectural character. On the south side, 199 Water Street and 200 Water Street, built in 1984 and 1973 respectively, are both over 30 stories of sheer vertical glass and masonry, in stark contrast to the early 19th century federalist buildings that characterize the Seaport area.

**Lighting schemes can play up this transition and more effectively announce it as the beginning of a distinctive commercial corridor.** The start of the planted median and public art at this intersection, both in the median and in the adjacent POPS, will engage passersby and draw them further along the street. Moreover, the current reconstruction of the Pearl Street Playground and Titanic Park on the north side of Fulton Street will improve the link between the Seaport and Lower Manhattan.



## GATEWAYS: WHITEHALL STREET

The southern gateway presents an opportunity to announce a transition to Water Street and complement Peter Minuit Plaza in front of the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. At its southern end, Water Street terminates at Whitehall Street. Over 3,000 people cross this intersection during morning rush hour, traveling to and from the Staten Island Ferry and nearby subway stations. Tourists and visitors also use this intersection going to and from Battery Park. This pattern will grow with the opening of the new carousel, playground and improvements to Peter Minuit Plaza that include a visitor kiosk and food service concession.

Between Whitehall and Moore Streets there is a separated right-hand turn lane, a remnant of Water Street's pre-1960 alignment. This roadway and its adjacent island can be added as pedestrian space to the adjacent sidewalk to create a new public space. **With good solar exposure and partly sheltered from winter winds, the new public space will encourage activity and events across the seasons and be an identifying feature for Water Street.**



*Unnecessary street pavement (red outline) at Whitehall Street can be transformed into an engaging pedestrian place.*



*Placemaking precedents from left to right: Meatpacking District, Pedestrian Plaza; P.S. 1, Architectural Installation; World Financial Center, Information Kiosk*





*Proposed design for Whitehall and Water Street gateway intersection*

## WHITEHALL SOUTHERN GATEWAY GOALS

1. Provide significant public plaza at Whitehall Street
2. Install large-scale art in median
3. Plant street trees on sidewalks and low plantings in median



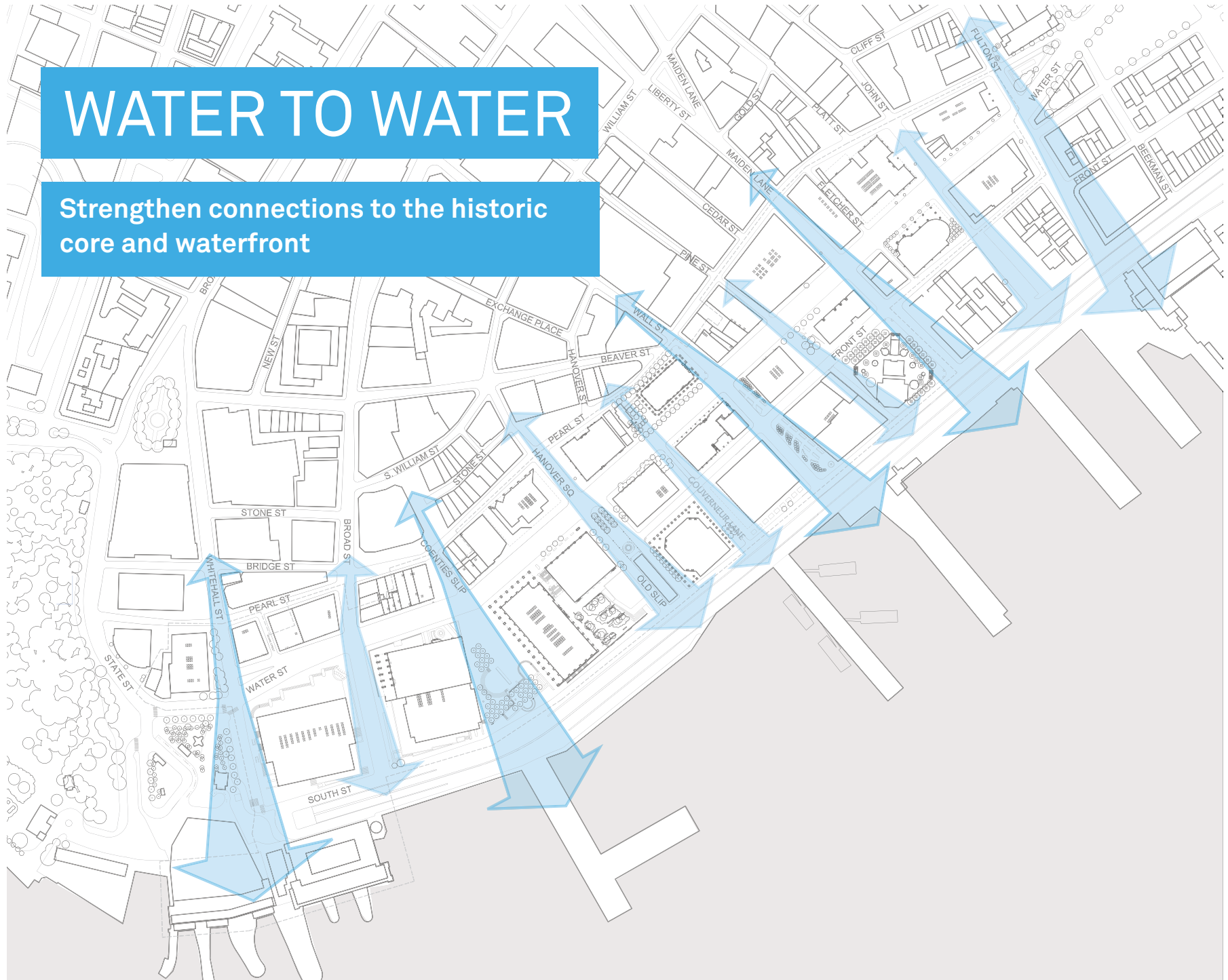
*Existing conditions at Whitehall and Water Street*



*Inspiration from the 23rd Street pedestrian plaza*

# WATER TO WATER

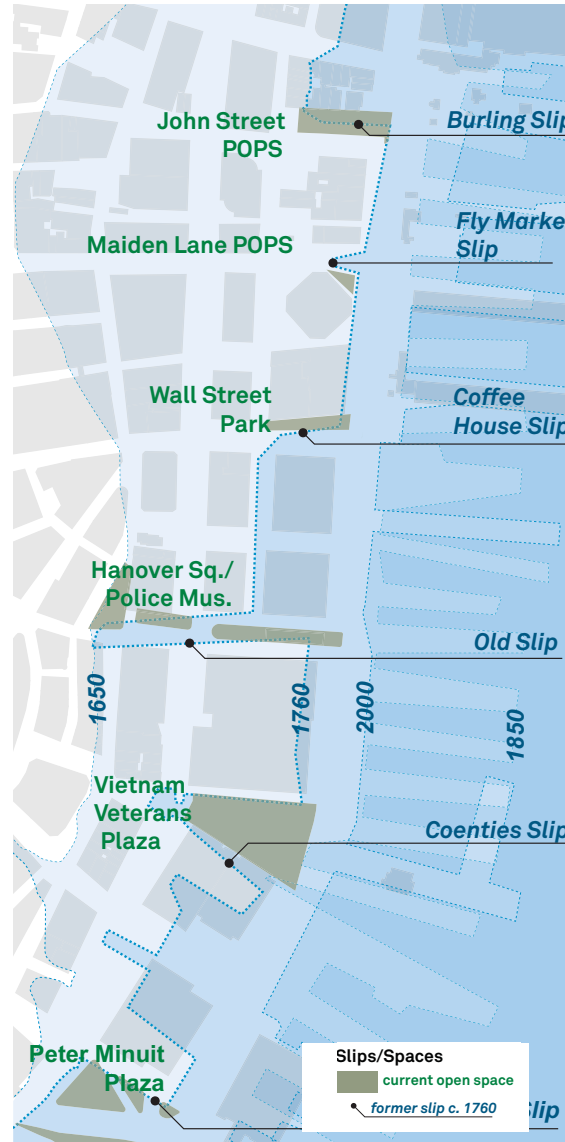
Strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront







Top: View along Maiden Lane from Water Street, once known as Fly Market Slip; Bottom: Mannahatta Park at Water Street and Wall Street, once known as Coffee House Slip



As Manhattan Island expanded, many of the historic boat slips between blocks were left open; these spaces were too small as development parcels, but too large for streets, resulting in open views between large buildings.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Create a physical and programmatic link between Water Street and the East River Waterfront
2. Improve sightlines between historic slips and the East River
3. Expand central open space to create an active, programmable destination
4. Integrate sustainable design into site improvements

The irony of Water Street is that there is no sense of how close the water actually is. Water Street can be the threshold or “seam” between the traditional Lower Manhattan experience and the new waterfront. The waterfront is one of Lower Manhattan’s greatest assets and in recent years there has been a concerted effort to reclaim it for the public. On the east side, the original slips which had been filled in generations ago and paved over have one by one been converted into pocket parks, with varying degrees of success. The South Ferry Terminal project is complete and plans have been approved to develop the Battery Maritime Building where ferries brought 275,000 people to Governors Island in 2009. [And, construction is under way on the \\$150 million East River Waterfront Esplanade and Piers Project, which will thankfully reopen Lower Manhattan’s waterfront for public use, two blocks from Water Street.](#)

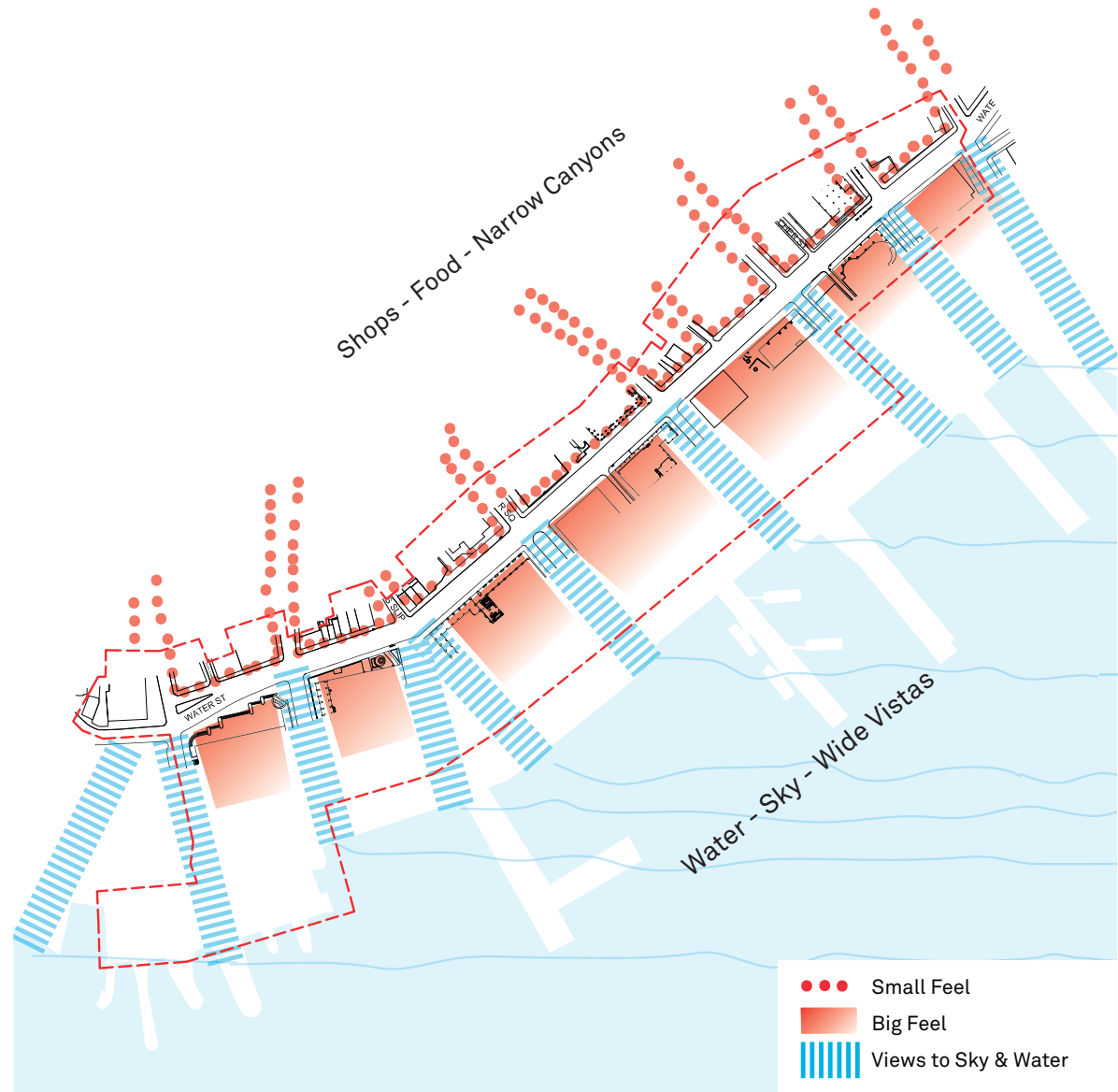


## CROSS STREETS

There is a sharp contrast between the east and west sides of Water Street. **Narrow side streets, smaller building footprints and more sunlight** define the western side, while **larger buildings and views towards the water dominate the east side.** These different characteristics create a natural edge for a pedestrian walking eastward out of Lower Manhattan's knot of streets onto Water Street and then toward the water.



Top: Large buildings dominate the east side of Water Street;  
Bottom: Small storefronts and narrow streets line the west



Water Street is a seam in the urban fabric, creating a different feeling on either side of the street

## STREET TREES

Currently, the trees along both Water Street and its cross streets are unequally distributed and their plant beds are inconsistent. *Though there are too few, the existing green areas do hint at potential visual connections along the street and suggest opportunity for enhancing the cross street transition between Water Street and the water.*

Two different groupings of tree species are proposed—one group along Water Street and the other down the cross streets. The cross street mix should be airy and transparent, such as honey locust, adding green to the street while still maintaining open views to the water.

Along Water Street a variety of species are proposed. The trees in the amenity strip would be planted in groups and clumps of like species to vary the pedestrian experience along the street. Species groups would include large trees such as Oaks, European Hornbeam, Ginkgo, Dawn Redwood, and Bald Cypress and small trees such as Amelanchier, Redbud, and American Hornbeam.

Long, continuous shared soil beds are proposed for the trees on both sides of Water Street, which will significantly contribute to their growth and longevity potential. Street tree planting on the cross streets should similarly seek the opportunities for continuous soil zones or larger tree pits for individual trees. *In addition to the visual and air quality benefits from street trees, these expanded planting areas detain storm water through infiltration, reduce the volume of water entering the sewer system and lessen the discharge of pollutants into the river during storms.*

## Existing green areas offer opportunities to improve the connection between Water Street and the water.

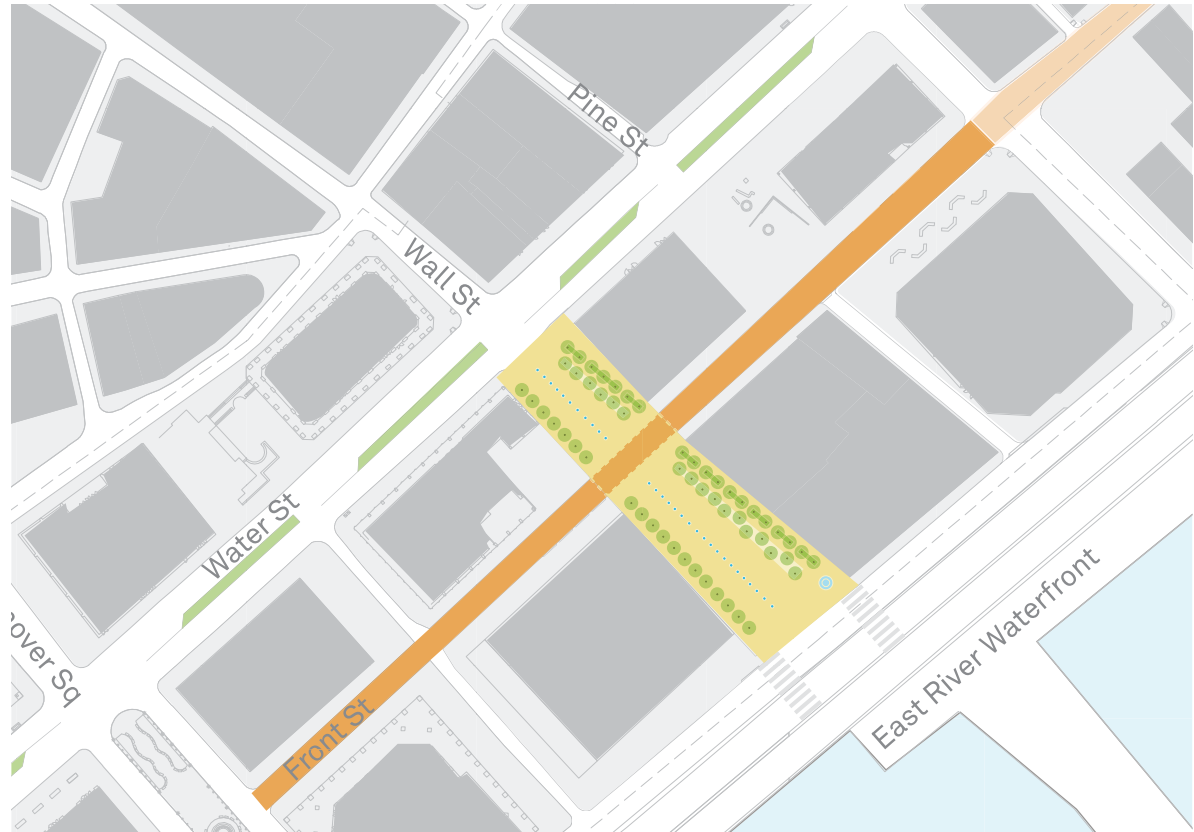


*Below: Tree planting links the waterfront to the narrow streets of the Financial District and also clusters along Water Street; Inset: Existing soil bed conditions, left, inhibit growth; proposed conditions, right, would allow healthier street trees with more significance on the street. Source: Casey Trees, Washington, D.C.*

## FRONT STREET

With a few notable exceptions, such as the front door to 180 Maiden Lane, Front Street, between Maiden Lane and Old Slip, serves as back service access for the buildings along Water Street. Though under-populated at most hours, on warm days the POPS along Front Street can be full of people eating lunch from the nearby mobile food carts.

Because so few personal vehicles use the street, **Front Street should become a shared street with partial traffic closures.** Partial traffic closures would allow space for events, such as lunchtime festivals, and could be coordinated with building deliveries and service needs to avoid significant disruptions to traffic flow.

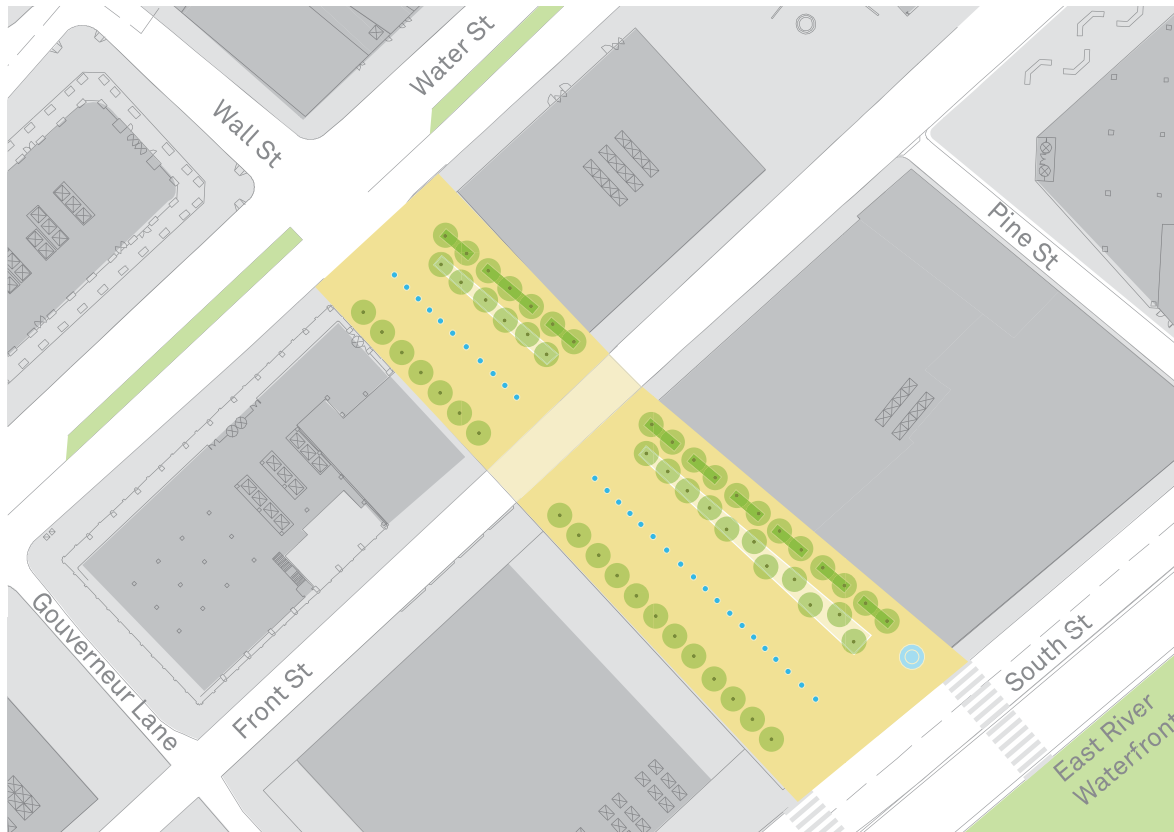


*Front Street between Maiden Lane and Old Slip will have partial closures for programmed events, such as those shown below; when not programmed, the street will allow vehicles to move through Mannahatta Park.*



*Programmed events on Front Street from left to right: Food Festival; Yoga in the park; Gourmet Food Truck at Mannahatta Park*





Security around the stock exchange has turned much of Wall Street into a pedestrian zone—an expanded Mannahatta Park between Water and south Streets would capitalize on this condition.



An expanded Mannahatta Park creates a new destination space along a major pedestrian route.

## MANNAHATTA PARK

While retaining its prominence as a business and tourist destination, in the last decade Wall Street has become a residential and retail hub. Security constraints around the New York Stock Exchange have also changed the experience of the street. The western half of Wall Street is now a de facto pedestrian zone, which has in turn greatly reduced traffic on the rest of the street.

Between Water and South Streets, Mannahatta Park replaced parking spaces for city vehicles with benches, plantings and a fountain, while maintaining a lane of traffic and two parking lanes. Remaining limited traffic volume and growing appeal to pedestrians suggests the space can become more.

At the western end of the street, Trinity Church, Federal Hall and the New York Stock Exchange define one of the most iconic architectural tableaux in the world. At its eastern end, Wall Street is the main entrance to the new East River Waterfront. However the existing design of Mannahatta Park and adjacent parking lanes do not fully leverage the opportunity to celebrate this important entrance. A redesigned park could become a grand entrance to the waterfront while maintaining limited vehicular access on a shared street. This will allow the entire space to be used to host events during weekends and off-hours. While still intimate in scale, the expanded space will be large enough to support daytime amenities like a temporary market and evening events like outdoor dancing and performances.

The new center of activity will draw more engaging ground-floor uses to the surrounding buildings. The reconstruction of the road bed into a pedestrian space offers the opportunity to reduce the flow of stormwater that causes sewer overflows to the river, through the use of permeable pavements, infiltration and subsurface detention in the new design. The expanded Mannahatta Park creates a flexible, high-performance space with new capabilities for events, ground floor activities and environmental sustainability.



*Potential weekday use of expanded Mannahatta Park*

A redesigned park  
could become a  
grand entrance to  
the waterfront.



*Left: Wall Street pre-Mannahatta Park Construction, 1997; Right: Mannahatta Park existing conditions*





*Potential weekend program for Mannahatta Park with an interactive fountain, cafe seating, open spaces for greenmarkets or events, and a direct path to the East River Waterfront*

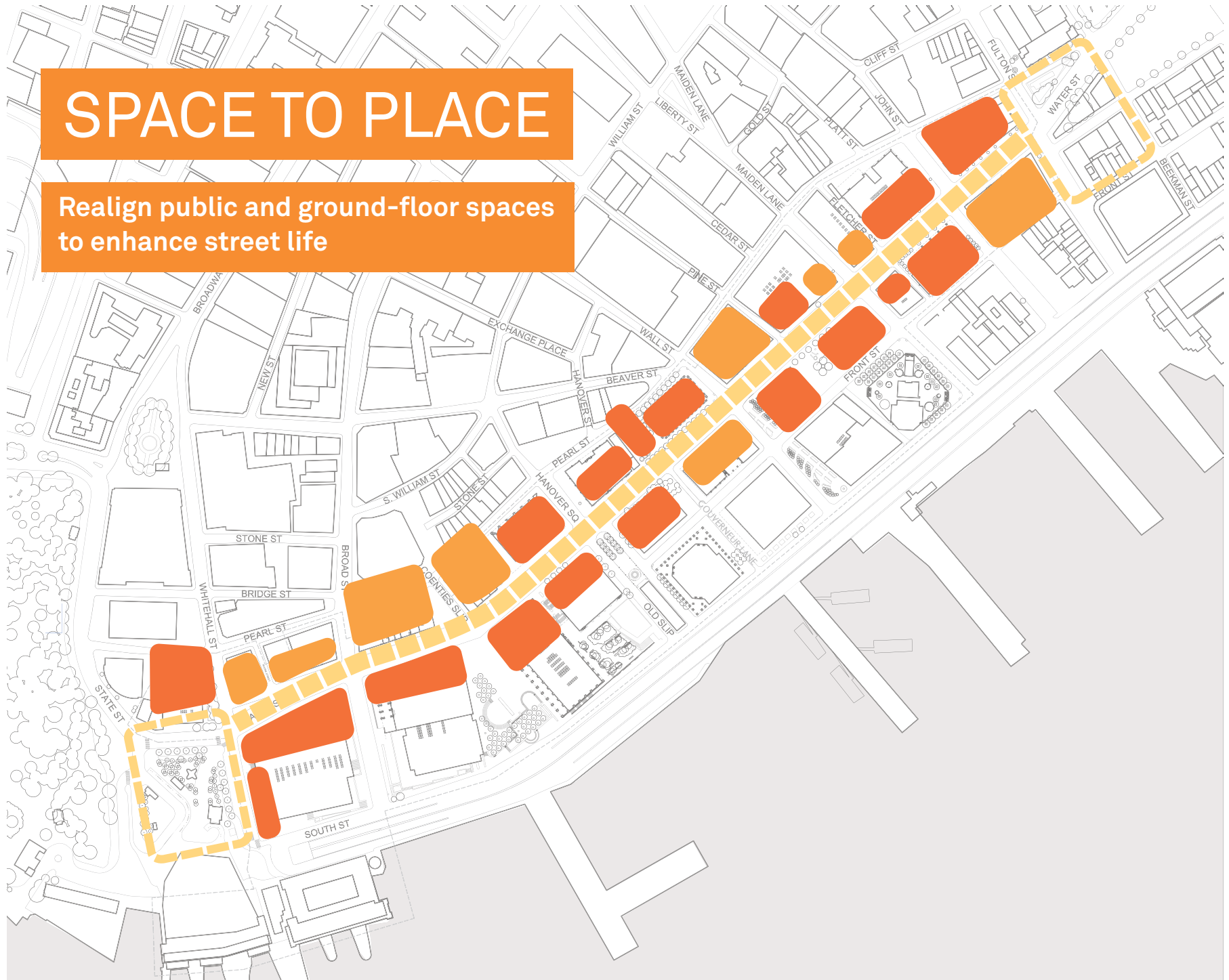
## EXPANDED MANNAHATTA PARK GOALS

1. Limit vehicle access to create a significant pedestrian plaza
2. Celebrate history as edge of old city and former slip
3. Reinforce connections between the Financial District and the East River Waterfront
4. Create high-performance space amenable to both the work day and weekend visitors



# SPACE TO PLACE

Realign public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life





*Clockwise from top left: View towards the water from POPS at Front Street and Maiden Lane; Arcade at Hanover Square; POPS at Water Street between Maiden Lane and Wall Street; POPS at Water Street and Gouverneur Lane*

## OBJECTIVES

1. Modify zoning regulations to facilitate redesign and infill of POPS and arcades
2. Reconfigure ground-floor spaces to enable new uses
3. Entice retail uses that target workers and extend to residents and tourists
4. Accelerate transformation by incentivizing capital reinvestment

Water Street is located at a unique collision of history and modernity. Under the banner of “urban renewal,” planners and architects of the mid-20th century sought to pave the way for an auto-oriented future. Widened to compete with burgeoning suburban office markets of the era, Water Street was set in stark contrast to the adjacent colonial maze by zoning changes in 1961, which favored height and density balanced by a wide-open streetscape. The zoning allowed for the creation of bonus plazas, arcades, and atria in exchange for additional building density. The resulting 41 underused open spaces, dark underpasses, and outsized lobbies now define the underwhelming street-level experience of Water Street.

Totaling nearly eight acres, or one-third the size of Battery Park, the distribution of open space along the 10-block corridor magnifies the unintended consequences of an unsuccessful strategy.

The intended public benefit of bonus zoning regulations—to create attractive amenities for pedestrians—was never fully realized on Water Street. Instead, the POPS deaden the streetscape and diffuse the energy that should be generated by such density. Because the POPS were built in exchange for development bonuses, there are significant constraints on how they can be reconfigured. But zoning is a means to an end, and when the existing conditions do not fulfill the intention of the code, the zoning should be adjusted. And it has been, to the point where none of the study area's POPS meet the criteria for location, layout or design elements for new POPS under the current zoning resolution. To convert these liabilities into assets on Water Street requires a comprehensive approach, addressing design, zoning, financing and programming.

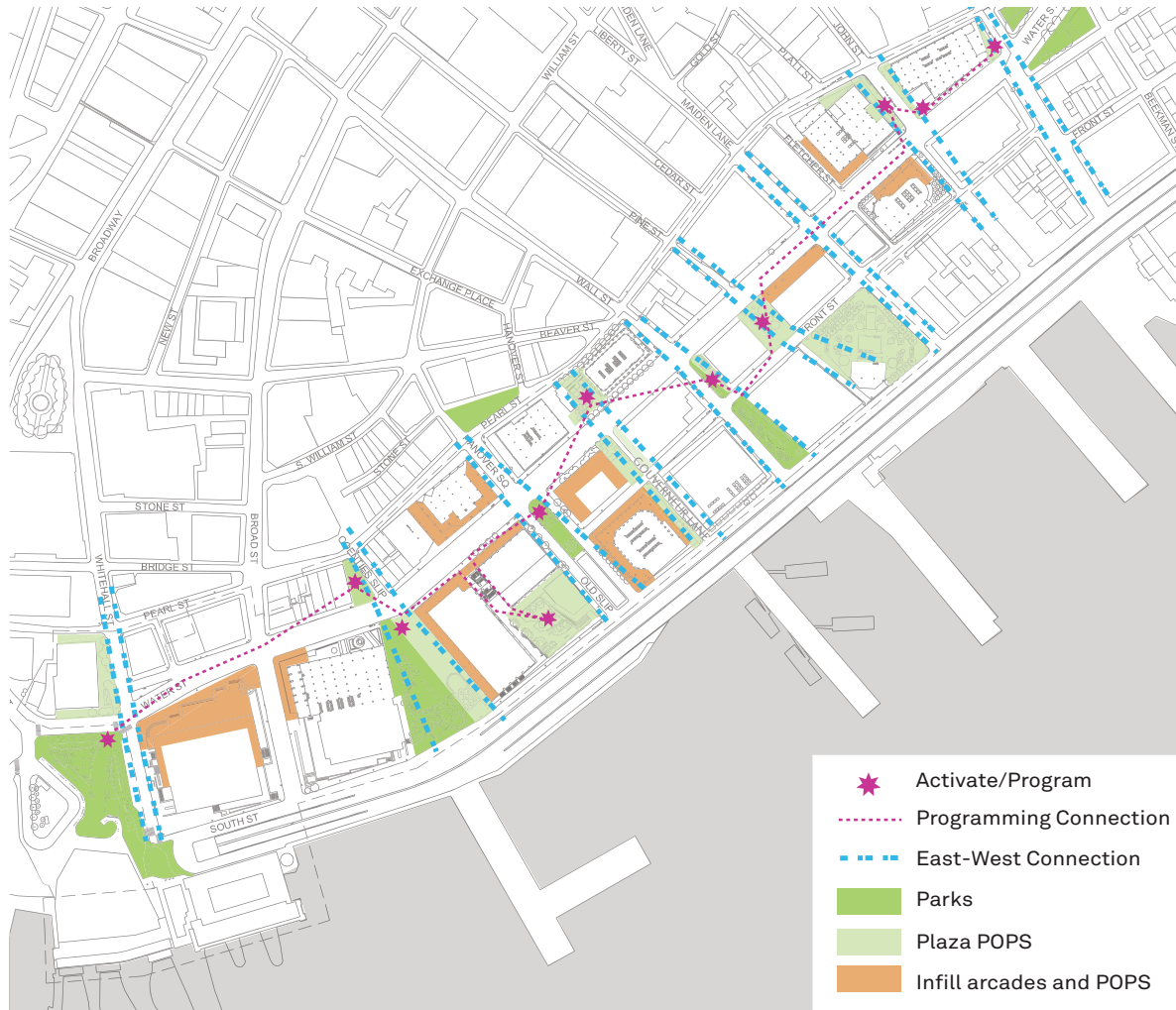
## APPROACHES TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ACTION

Redesigning and repositioning underused ground-floor space inside Water Street's post-1961 commercial buildings is largely sanctioned by the zoning resolution. But today, the only recourse for a property owner to improve the public realm within and adjacent to the building line is to seek a special permit, an uncertain and individual process which by definition neither acknowledges nor encourages potential district-wide change. The permit process should acknowledge the broader context along Water Street and promote private action on a significant scale. Incentivizing action by owners at key locations would validate the benefits of rethinking the design and use of their POPS.



The intended public benefit of bonus zoning regulations was never fully realized on Water Street.





## OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES

The POPS along the Water Street corridor are not homogeneous. Changes to individual plazas should reflect the distinct role each can and should play to support a more active and engaging Water Street. POPS near major circulation centers such as the intersections with Whitehall, Wall and Fulton streets should support pedestrian flow in the area. The few public spaces with good access to sunlight, mostly those that align with the historic slips, should prioritize new seating and space for gatherings such as markets or lunchtime concerts. Priorities for the modification of open spaces are as follows:

- Reinforce plazas that enhance east-west connections
- Enclose arcades, partially or fully, to provide active retail space
- Infill or program the POPS that have large frontage on Water Street
- Consider kiosks in POPS and building entrances on POPS frontage to encourage pedestrian activity

*POPS, arcades and parks can be redesigned and repurposed to create a more engaging public environment.*



*Pre-zoning amendment POPS on Water and Pine Streets*



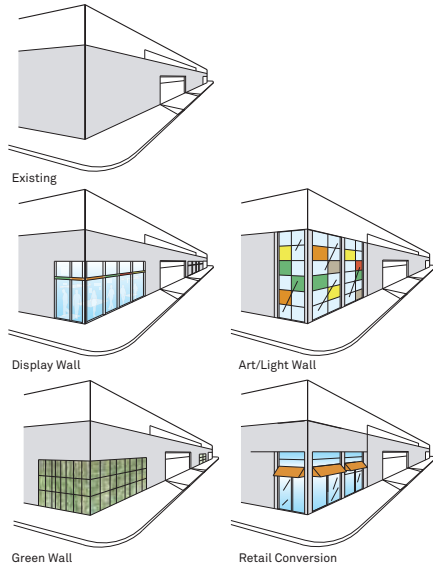
*Post-zoning amendment POPS on William and Cedar Streets*

POPS diffuse the energy that should be generated by high built density.

## STRATEGIES TO ACTIVATE GROUND FLOORS

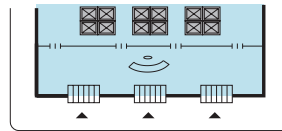
The vision for Water Street supports active street life by concentrating amenities where people are most likely to use them rather than sustaining dozens of self-contained spaces spread out along the entire street. The following outlines several strategies for achieving this vision, some permissible under existing zoning but requiring incentives, others only possible with zoning changes. Selected buildings are then highlighted to demonstrate the intended effect of approaches which are applicable in locations throughout the corridor. Strategies for the modification of ground-floor space and POPS include:

- Activating Blank Walls and Large Lobbies
- Infilling Bonus Arcades
- Modifying Bonus Plazas

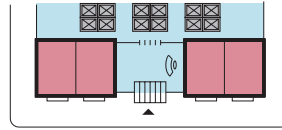


*Interior spaces and blank walls can be modified without regulatory change.*

### Potential Strategies for Excessive Lobbies

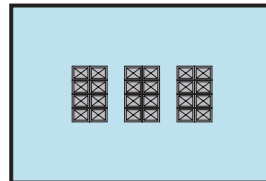


Existing

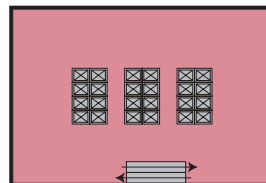


Retail Conversion  
(no zoning change required)

### Potential Strategies for Urban Format Retail

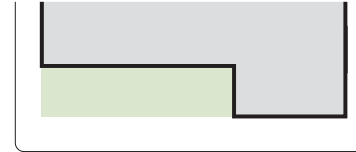


Second Floor Office  
(large floor plate)

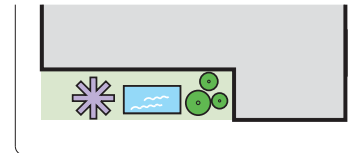


Retail Conversion  
(no zoning change required)

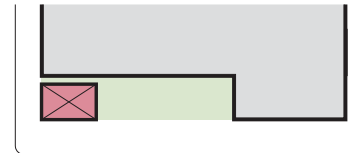
### Potential Strategies for Bonus Plazas



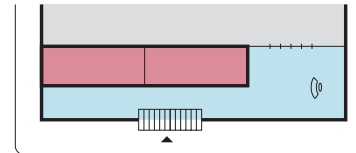
Existing



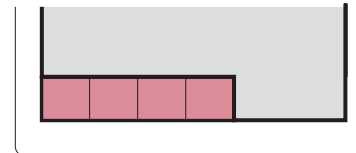
Art/Landscape/Lighting  
(no regulatory change)



Kiosk  
(requires zoning change)

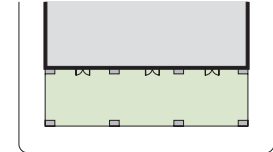


Winter Garden  
(requires zoning change)

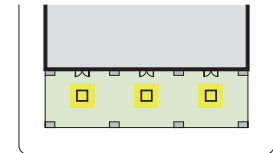


Retail Expansion  
(requires zoning change)

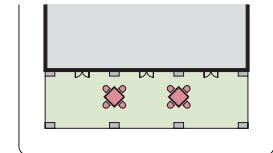
### Potential Strategies for Bonus Arcades



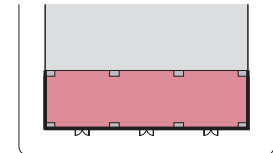
Existing



Art/Lighting  
(no regulatory change)



Outdoor Cafe Seating  
(requires zoning change)



Retail Infill  
(requires zoning change)

*With change in regulation, POPS and arcades may be a greater public benefit through additional amenities and enclosed retail or winter gardens, as shown above.*

These strategies will help attract foot traffic and enhance the perception of Water Street as an active, lively corridor.



*At right from top to bottom: Existing conditions at Pine and Water streets; Interactive light wall; Reconfigured space for retail use; Living green wall*

## ACTIVATING BLANK WALLS AND LARGE LOBBIES

Without regulatory change, the opportunity exists to modify blank walls into more attractive facades, modify ground floors to convert excessive lobby areas into retail, or use art, landscaping, and lighting to improve the open spaces and arcades. As-of-right, uninviting and underutilized ground-floor spaces could be programmed or infilled with retail or cultural venues. **These interventions would help attract foot traffic and enhance the perception of Water Street as an active, lively corridor.**

## BLANK WALL CASE STUDY: 80 PINE STREET

The inactive blank wall on the corner of Water and Pine Street disengages pedestrians, often causing them to quickly walk by or avoid this block altogether. The wall currently serves as the exterior to the corner of an indoor parking garage. Similar to other blank walls along the street, **simple design strategies could enliven the building exterior without requiring a change of the interior uses.** Tactics might include a living vegetated wall, interactive lighting or a display wall. These interventions would significantly enhance the pedestrian experience. As artistic pieces they may also serve as a destination in themselves. **A more intensive, revenue-generating approach would involve reconfiguring a corner of the ground floor** to insert a small retail space. This would not only increase the value of the corner but also maintain a rhythm of active retail opportunities along the length of the street.



## INFILLING BONUS ARCADES

Though eliminating blank walls and reducing lobby size can improve the street, **the full transformation of Water Street cannot occur without addressing arcades.** By creating empty space between the sidewalk and the building facade, arcades deaden the pedestrian experience. They create out-of-scale and underused passageways that limit options for successful retail storefronts by setting them back from the street wall. None of the arcades on Water Street are necessary to maintain efficient pedestrian circulation and all fail to make any positive contribution to an active streetscape. The lack of retail dissipates the buying power of Water Street's 70,000 workers, who out of necessity shop and dine off the street and often out of the district or even out of the city. Encouraging infill retail would greatly benefit the character of the street, creating amenities that meet the demand of Lower Manhattan's workers, residents and visitors and spurring citywide economic development.

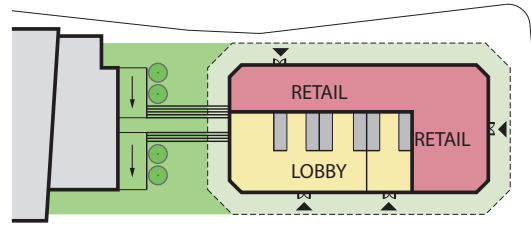


75 Wall Street existing condition

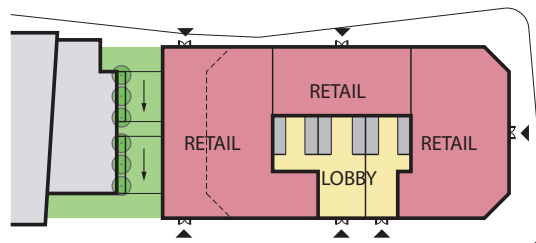
## INFILL CASE STUDY: 75 WALL STREET

75 Wall Street, a 1987 office tower, has been converted to a luxury hotel and residential complex. But where is the retail its 250 hotel rooms and 350 condos could support? And where is the European-style outdoor seating which draws crowds to Stone Street, a few blocks away? A more open landscape design for the POPS that allows outdoor cafe seating and enhanced east-west pedestrian connection would make this a more welcoming space. **In order to create a vibrant street, the undesirable shallow arcades should be filled in up to the building line with retail and entrances that engage the street.** Going further, the creation of a restaurant pavilion in the POPS could be a destination itself, drawing from Water Street and Wall Street pedestrian traffic.

Redesign POPS/  
Lighting or art in arcade

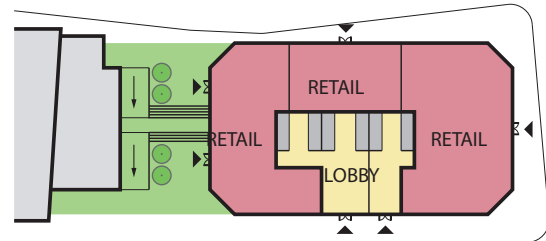


Infill Arcade/  
Infill POPS



The positive transformation of Water Street cannot occur without addressing the numerous bonus arcades.

Infill Arcade





*Top: Potential arcade infill intervention at 75 Wall Street would allow outdoor cafe seating and greater retail visibility;  
Bottom: Potential pavilion intervention at 75 Wall Street would create enclosed space for a restaurant and enhance street activity.*



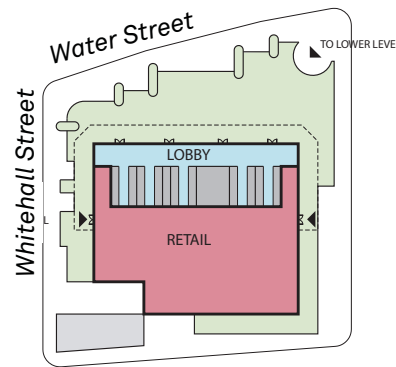
## MODIFYING BONUS PLAZAS CASE STUDY: ONE NY PLAZA

Up to 7,000 people per hour pass by the front door of the 2.6-million-square-foot One New York Plaza, including 80,000 daily riders of the Staten Island Ferry, yet it fails to provide anything close to the retail opportunities found in areas of comparable foot traffic. Instead of retail frontage to capture this volume, there is an expansive open-air plaza devoid of activity. This POPS faces constant wind and poor sunlight, harsh weather conditions rendering it largely unusable throughout most of the year.

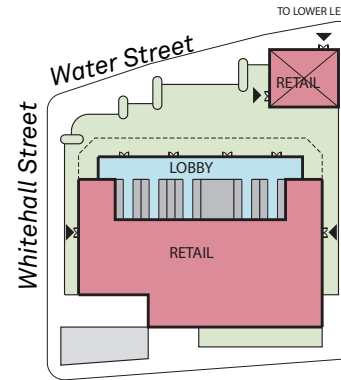
A range of interventions could harness the full potential of this space. A modest intervention would reorganize the below-ground retail space and provide more distinctive entrances at street level in the POPS. A more ambitious approach to achieve the greatest street-level activity would be to fill in the unusable plaza with retail or a winter garden to provide both retail and weather protection. **Seizing this opportunity will become more significant as tourist traffic to Governors Island, the new Battery Park and Pier A grows in the coming years.**

The vision supports active street life by concentrating amenities where people are most likely to use them.

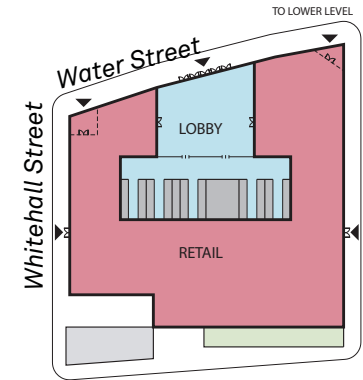
*Approach 1  
Urban Format Retail*



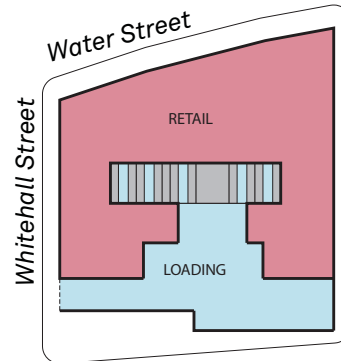
*Approach 2  
Arcade Infill and Pavilion in POPS*



*Approach 3  
Arcade Infill and Winter Garden*



*Urban Format Retail at Lower Level  
Applicable in all Approaches*



*Existing condition at Whitehall and Water Streets*





*Potential intervention at Water and Whitehall Streets encloses portions of the POPS to provide street level presence for enhanced retail*

“When you think Water Street, you think movement. The question is how do you break that down and redirect to promote retail and street life where it can work best.”

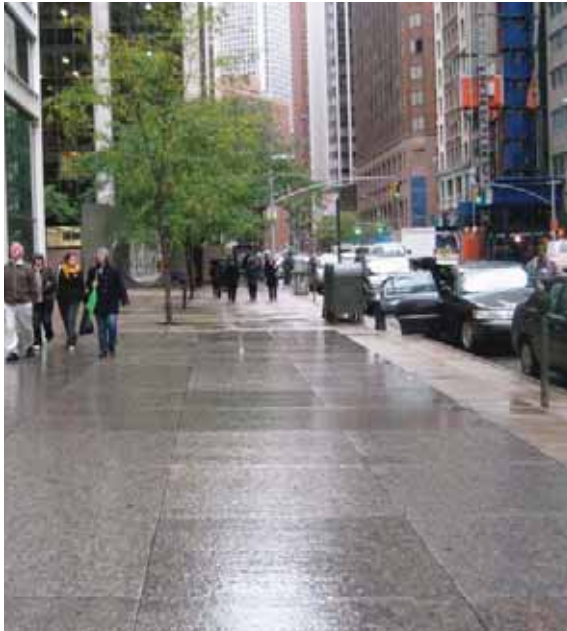
- Peter Poulakakos, *Proprietor Harry's Steak and Cafe*

# DAY TO NIGHT

Extend the hours of activity along  
Water Street







*Clockwise from top left: Sidewalk and POPS in front of 88 Pine; Public art in POPS at 88 Pine; Blank wall and parking garage at Water Street and Pine Street; Arcade at Hanover Square obscuring retail*

## OBJECTIVES

1. Program open spaces with regular and seasonal events and public art
2. Illuminate pedestrian space and building facades
3. Provide publicly accessible Wi-Fi and other information technology

Changes on Water Street should cultivate street life that extends beyond peak commuting hours. The re-envisioned street and plazas will offer a stage to extend activity into the evening, through the weekend and across the seasons. By generating new activity and building on the improvements being made in the surrounding areas, a coordinated framework for art and events will extend the presence of people, enhance the value of open space and reposition the role of Water Street in Lower Manhattan.

## EXISTING STREET ACTIVITY

Activity on Water Street is dominated by office workers during commuting hours and at lunchtime on weekdays. The busiest intersections during rush hour are at the most convenient access points for public transportation: Fulton, Wall, Broad, and Whitehall streets, with up to 2,000 pedestrians crossing Water Street in one direction in an hour at each intersection.

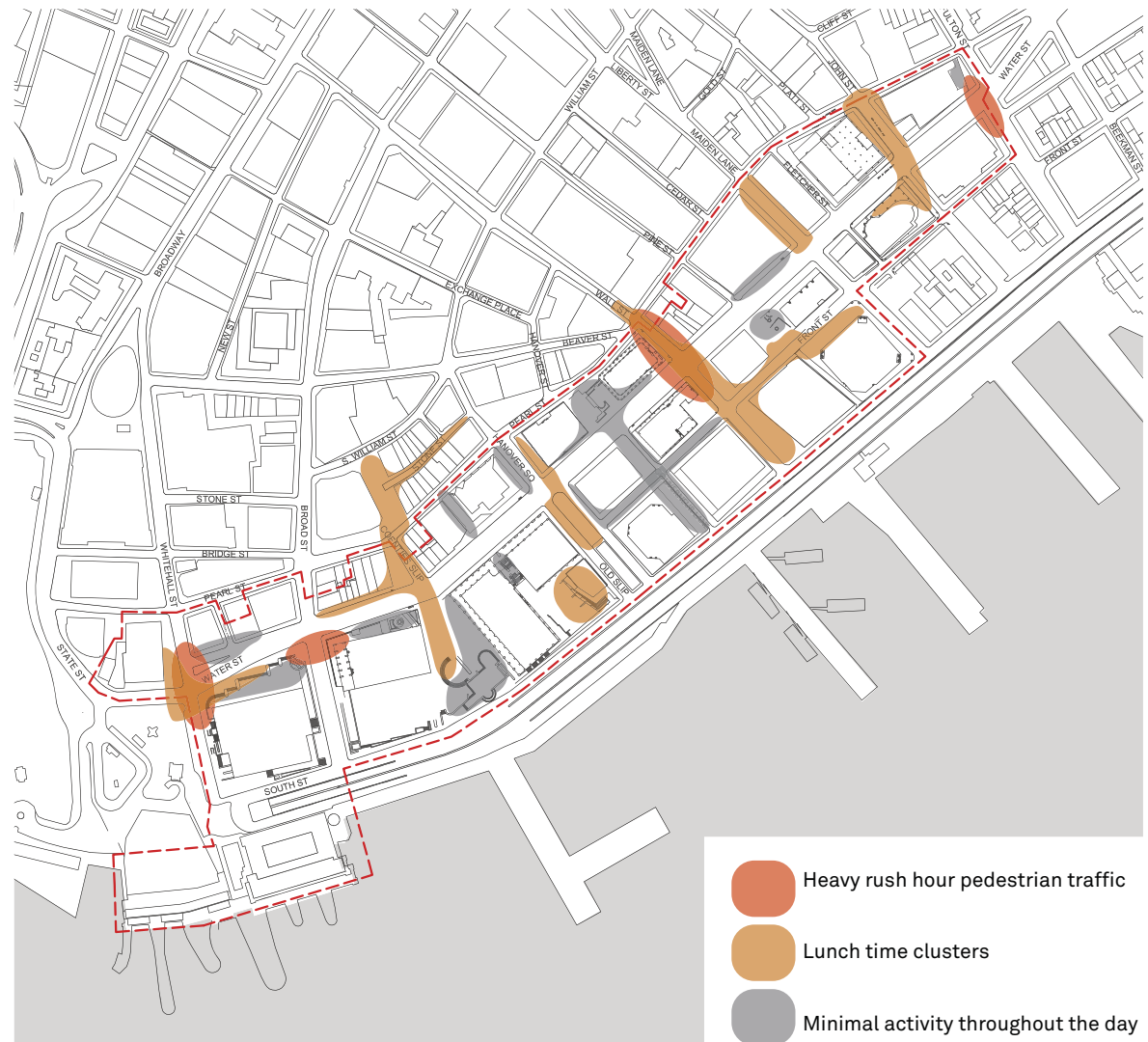


During warmer months, office workers venture to public spaces and sidewalks where street vendors are set up. People gather outside to eat or socialize, whether on nearby benches or in those public plazas with ample sun, minimal wind, and vegetation, such as Old Slip and 100 Wall Street. Some retail spaces have outdoor cafes that are also busy at lunch time.

But weekday pedestrians typically avoid many of the open spaces and sidewalks of Water Street because there is not much to see or do there. And, despite destinations such as South Street Seaport, Battery Park and ferries to Staten Island and Governors Island at either end, there is little weekend activity on Water Street. Pedestrian counts show no more than a dozen people walking the length at any given time. Vehicle traffic is also much lighter on weekends, with only three to four cars lined up at red lights.

## PROGRAMMING

Coupled with physical changes, intensive programming would contribute to making Water Street a more lively place. A varied mix of events will leverage the diverse range of large and small spaces on Water Street, while seeking to capture the attention of workers, residents and visitors alike. Along with the reconfigured street, the public realm of plazas and arcades could create a vibrant and engaging environment, building a meaningful connection to people and place, while extending activity well into the evening, through the weekend and across the seasons.



*While areas in the sun are busy during lunchtime, many of the Street's public spaces remain desolate throughout the day*

# Intensive programming would contribute to making Water Street a more lively and engaging place.



*Water Street can be activated through a rhythm of programmed events and markets in public spaces along the corridor*



*Outdoor public performance at Lincoln Center*



*Community Planting Day at Mannahatta Park*



*Midsummer Night Swing at Damrosch Park*



*Holiday Festival at Saks Fifth Avenue*



*River to River concert at Castle Clinton*



**Performance and Events:** Outdoor concerts, shows and exhibitions are a Lower Manhattan tradition. The annual River to River Festival and predecessor events draw people to venues throughout the district, including the Elevated Acre at 55 Water Street, home to an outdoor movie series. *Water Street's many empty plazas present staging opportunities for more festival programming.*

**Markets:** Temporary green market installations create a reason for people to gather, and foster the mixing of diverse groups. With a strong history of regular markets at Bowling Green, Zuccotti Park, and the recent additions of the Fulton Stall and New Amsterdam Markets in the Seaport, Lower Manhattan has proven to be a successful destination in the citywide trend. *With low start-up costs and mobile infrastructure, markets could be deployed to solidify the urban life of key spaces along Water Street.* Supported by a dense mix of workers and residents, the most viable locations for additional markets are the parks at Wall Street, Old Slip and Coenties Slip, all of which connect pedestrians moving between Water Street and the historic Financial District. An expanded Mannahatta Park could serve as a new destination green market at the heart of the district.

**Placemaking:** Colorful arrangements of tables, chairs, umbrellas, portable landscaping, flowers, banners, and kiosks could create comfortable places for daily relaxation and social life. Recurring patterns of these elements could serve to link the various parks and plazas of Water Street, encouraging pedestrians to extend their journey. *Temporary installations and special events can draw people to inhabit and appreciate spaces in new and surprising ways.*

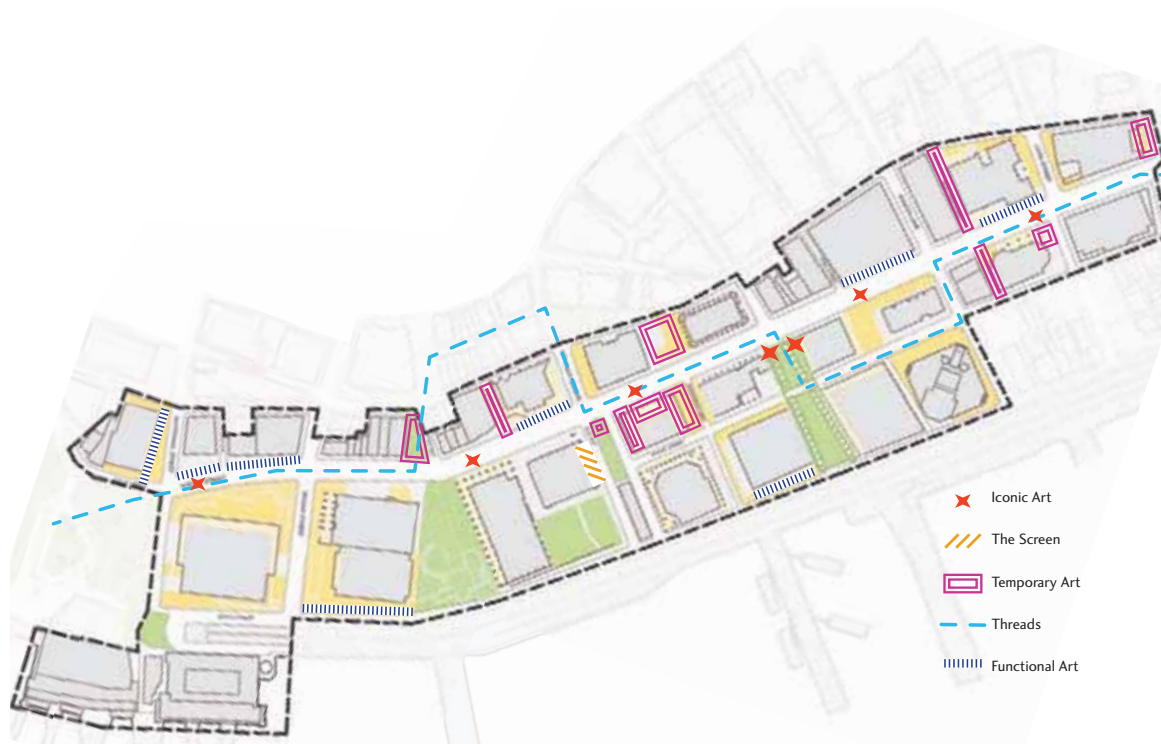


*Top: Regular events, such as Movie Nights at the Elevated Acre or the New Amsterdam Market can bring new life to Water Street;  
Bottom: A giant chess game has become a placemaking anchor at a park in Switzerland*



## PUBLIC ART

**Iconic Art:** From grand gestures to subtle surprises, public art is an essential tool in creating compelling and memorable experiences on Water Street. Installations on Water Street are memorable but they lack a meaningful and defining link. To achieve this, the new landscaped median could become the site of distinctive permanent art. New sites for public art should be identified wherever possible in the redesign and modification of existing plazas and building arcades. **Iconic installations would draw people along the street and announce the importance of Water Street as a premier commercial boulevard.** Key intersections at Fulton, Wall and Whitehall streets could provide ideal locations for noteworthy works to signify gateways onto and through Water Street.



*Curated art in public spaces, including the median, will help create a compelling identity for Water Street*



*Left to right: 'Play Me I'm Yours' creates a thread of serendipitous performance in London; Iconic art at 7 World Trade Center New York City, Balloon Flower by Jeff Koons; New York Avenue median, Washington D.C., Nana on a Dolphin by Niki de Saint Phalle*

**Temporary art:** Deployment of temporary installations on Water Street would ensure that the corridor remains fresh and relevant. Building setbacks, arcades and plazas could become sites for a renewed experience ranging from contemplative to dynamic and engaging. A vibrant community of arts and cultural organizations have long ensured that Lower Manhattan is a nexus of captivating, premier visual and performance art. Building on a long history of temporary art in Lower Manhattan, the Downtown Alliance continues to apply its own program of Re:Construction, a public art program made possible by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Similarly, on Water Street, designated sites in building arcades and plazas can take the form of a curated thread of rotating works executed in partnership with public agencies and private property owners.

**Functional art:** Contemporary streetscape embraces contributions from a wide range of disciplines including furniture design, environmental signage, and sustainable design. When implementing open space modifications, private owners can incorporate creative and functional street furniture into the redesigned public realm. Addition of tables, chairs, umbrellas, portable landscaping, flowers, banners, and kiosks will serve to link the various parks and plazas visually, encouraging pedestrians to extend their journey another block along the street.

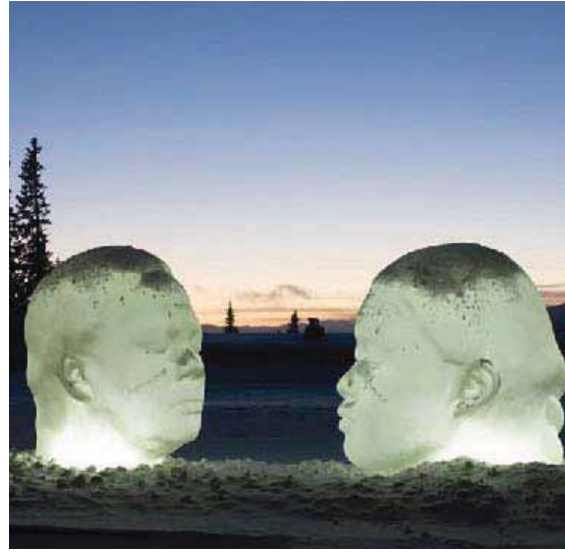


From grand gestures to subtle surprises, public art is an essential tool in defining a compelling identity for Water Street.



*Temporary installations can be used to recast sites as canvasses for innovative public art.  
Top to bottom: Port Sunlight at Lever House by Richard Woods; Walking Men 99 at 99 Church Street by Maya Barkai*





*Threads are multi-part art works that could create a narrative along all or parts of Water Street, leading visitors on an adventure*

“We are attracted to the best streets not because we have to go there but because we want to be there. The best are as joyful as they are utilitarian.”

- Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*

*Public art can be functional, serving to animate public plazas and arcades. Top: Street furniture by Zaha Hadid; Bottom: Floating on a New York Sidewalk, subway map by Francoise Schein*

*Top: Iconic art contributes to a street's identity, Jaume Plensa's Talking Continents, Jacksonville; Bottom: Mark di Suvero's Joie de Vivre in Zuccotti Park*

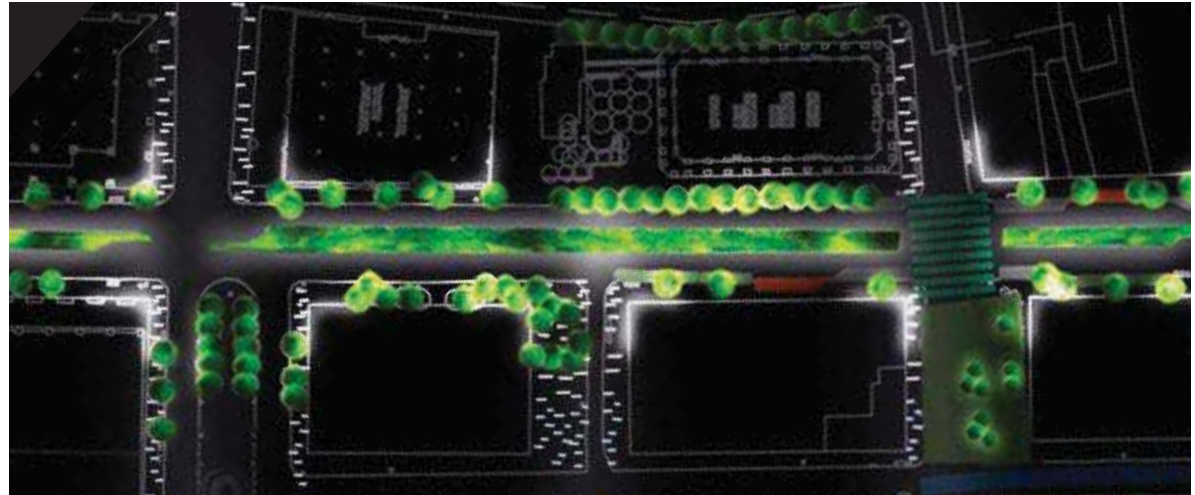


## LIGHTING

**Pedestrian Lighting:** Lighting contributes to an exciting urban environment by extending the life of a street beyond work hours. All too often, however, city streets are lit for the benefit of motorists while ignoring the sidewalk. *Appropriate design and application of lighting can help to privilege the scale and experience of pedestrians.*

Effective lighting should provide an attractive pathway for pedestrians moving east and west along established commuter pathways, while also drawing visitors through the district along Water Street. Pedestrian-scaled lighting would reinforce connections and the identity of Water Street, enabling visitors to recognize and appreciate their experience of the street. Small fixtures placed in tree pits could create a soft glow bouncing off of the street trees and landscape. Lighting in the proposed median would further complement the sidewalk treatment reinforcing the identity of a reconfigured commercial boulevard at night.

**Facade Illumination:** Working in tandem with private and public interests, the illumination of Water Street can expand existing programs for architectural lighting throughout Lower Manhattan. Recent years have brought complementary efforts by Wall Street Rising and the Downtown Alliance to enhance the nighttime experience of the Financial District with dramatic facade illumination. *A new and expanded program of compelling and coordinated lighting installations could make use of Water Street's arcades, blank walls, and tall buildings as well as the open spaces along its length, turning dark spaces into bright ones and animating static spaces with movement.*



*Top: Plan view of Water Street with proposed lighting elements: In addition to uplighting along the median and Water Street sidewalks, reflectors guide pedestrians toward and away from the waterfront along crossing streets;  
Bottom: Shop windows and indirect lighting of street trees illuminate pedestrian space*

**Annual Festival:** An annual festival could build on the precedents for integration of dramatic light installations that have transformed Lower Manhattan in recent years. Brought together under the auspices of the Municipal Art Society and Creative Time, the annual Tribute in Light© is now made possible by a grant from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and assistance from Con Edison. Connecting live performance with visual art, and advanced technologies to reinforce the identity of place, a Festival of Light and New Media could anchor a unique series of annual programming on Water Street.

## FREE WIRELESS INTERNET

Ubiquitous access to information and modes of communication have become a proxy for economic development the world over. Providing an amenity for area workers, residents, and visitors in Lower Manhattan, the Downtown Alliance has installed a successful network of hotspots to make the public realm more useful and enjoyable. Expansion of this network along the sidewalk and in the plazas of Water Street would drive traffic to area retailers and cultural attractions, and allow office workers

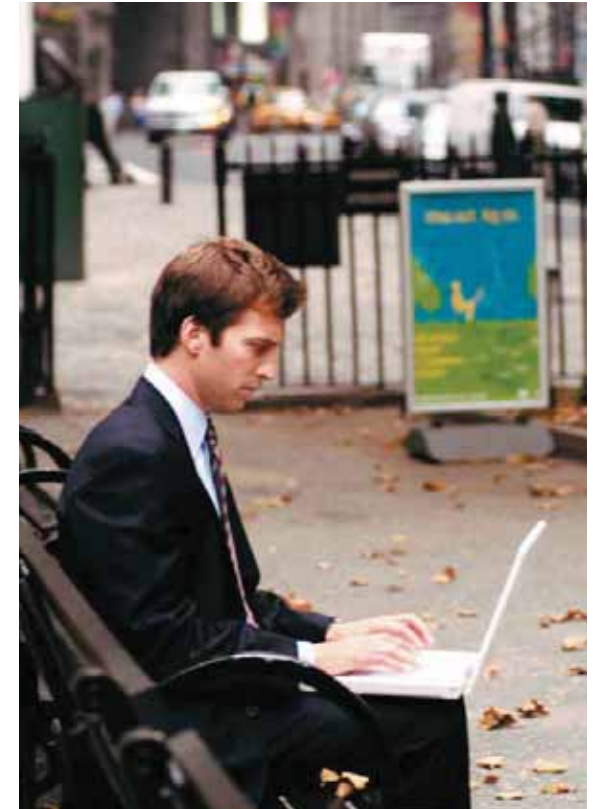
to check email while sipping a latte in the park. The opportunity to create a continuous Wi-Fi zone along Water Street might be accomplished efficiently with installation on the top of light poles at strategic locations to provide coverage throughout all public spaces along the street.

[A wide array of programming could leverage the investment in a connected corridor including interactive public art, and smartphone apps.](#)

Visitors, workers and residents would benefit from easier access to information on next bus timing, historic and cultural attractions and nearby retail and dining options.



Top: Accent lighting in the median and uplighted landscape elements would provide a pedestrian level glow along the streetscape;  
Bottom: Light projected on building facades for holidays and celebrations could bring inanimate walls to life with dynamic images



Free public Wi-Fi enables extended and innovative uses of the public realm



# IMPLEMENTATION

## MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

This vision for Water Street proposes broad integrated changes in the physical environment to sustain the success of Lower Manhattan's key commercial corridor. The character of the Water Street subdistrict calls for ambitious and holistic intervention across each facet of the physical environment.

The transformation of Water Street can start today, and is wholly achievable by 2020. It will require the support, resources and coordination of many public and private partners. The following recommendations outline next steps while remaining focused on achievement of the complete vision, comprising these four basic elements:

- Rescale the street to create an iconic boulevard
- Strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront
- Realign public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life
- Extend the hours of activity along Water Street



*Aerial view of proposed vision for a new Water Street*



# The transformation of Water Street can start now, and is wholly achievable by 2020.



2010

2015

2020

- Re-stripe roadway with temporary materials
- Replace trees where needed
- Install pilot plaza at Whitehall St
- Provide info kiosk at gateways
- Enhance signage and wayfinding

- Close Front Street for lunch time programming
- Test street closures at Wall Street

- Amend zoning regulations and standardize design review

- Schedule events and installations
- Install Wifi and smart street services

- De-map southbound lane at Whitehall and start design of Water Street Reconstruction

- Complete comprehensive design for Mannahatta Park

- Attract and incentivize new retail
- Encourage capital investment in POPS/Arcades

- Develop and install curated art and events program
- Install east-west reflector lights

- Relocate obstructions to allow continuous soil beds and plant street trees

- Reconstruct Mannahatta Park

- Continue capital investment in POPS/Arcades

- Install Alliance light poles on east side of street and landscape lighting where possible

- Construct permanent landscaped median
- Construct sidewalk extension on west side
- Install neckdowns

- Complete lighting installation

*Potential timeline for implementation of recommendations*

## ANCHOR TO ANCHOR: Rescale the street to create a distinctive boulevard

The reconstruction of Water Street included in the NYCDOT capital plan creates an opportunity to implement the reconfiguration proposed in this report. While available funding will only provide for in-kind replacement of the existing street, additional funds should be allocated to initiate a thorough transformation including relocation of utilities to accommodate new sidewalk tree pits and planting, extension of curb line and build-out of a landscaped median. All measures taken together have the potential to achieve the vision of a distinct urban boulevard.



### Recommendations:

- 1. Implement temporary interventions to demonstrate the benefits of street reconfiguration.**
  - The success of DOT's temporary plaza program demonstrates that interim and cost-effective interventions can bring tangible change while setting the stage for permanent reconstruction when funding becomes available. This strategy could be implemented on Water Street by:
  - Restriping the roadway to limit moving traffic to one lane in each direction
  - Using temporary materials to create a median, turning bays, sidewalk extensions and neck downs
  - Painting 'Sharrow' lane markings that alert drivers to the presence of bicycles in the new, widened traffic lane
  - Planting new trees where possible with the existing installation standards
- 2. Make improvements to the southern gateway of Water Street:**
  - Pilot a new public plaza at Whitehall Street with temporary interventions beginning immediately
  - Begin efforts to de-map the southbound slip lane at Water Street and Whitehall to allow the creation of a permanent plaza with opportunity for seating, shade and an outdoor food concession
  - Leverage improvements to Peter Minuit Plaza and pavilion to encourage pedestrian activity on Water Street 3.
- 3. Define the northern gateway of Water Street:**
  - Augment the redesign under way in public parks at Fulton and Water Street
  - Consider opportunities to use lighting and public art in the plaza at 200 Water Street
  - Establish a Downtown information kiosk at the corner of Fulton and Water
- 4. Enhance signage and wayfinding to acknowledge proximity to destinations and transit.**

Augmenting existing signage to improve connections between Water Street and the rest of Lower Manhattan.
- 5. Expand the scope of the street reconstruction to include all elements reviewed in the vision plan.**
  - Utilize existing Federal Highway Administration capital funding for street reconstruction to provide in-kind replacement and street design enhancements.
  - Implement a single widened moving lane and one parking lane in each direction
  - Construct a permanent landscaped median with locations for permanent public art and left turning bays
  - Construct a sidewalk extension with amenity zone along the west side of Water Street
  - Utilize sidewalk neck downs wherever possible to reduce pedestrian exposure at intersections
  - Relocate obstructions during street reconstruction to allow for continuous soil beds for street trees
  - Install pedestrian-friendly lighting along with new roadbed light poles and complete corridor-wide Wi-Fi

## WATER TO WATER:

Improve east-west pathways to strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront

Pedestrian activity on Water Street is dominated by several key intersections. Workers, residents and visitors tend to travel east-west to and from the Financial District or the water's edge, rather than along Water Street. Harnessing this condition by improving the experience at major crossings can create strong linkages between Water Street and the historic core and waterfront and will better integrate the corridor into surrounding areas.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Expand Mannahatta Park, allowing for large, programmable open space.

- Design queues along with both temporary and permanent barriers can delimit Wall Street to emergency vehicles, while maintaining full vehicle access through Front Street.
- Test the concept of an enlivened Wall Street destination with weekend and off-hour street closures and incremental reprogramming of parking lanes
- Redefine the space through a comprehensive design effort centered on the opportunities for place-making through landscape, trees, street furniture, fountains, art and programming
- Bring a material and design palette that complements recent security zone improvements on Wall Street while aligning pedestrians toward the views and experience of the East River Esplanade

### 2. Bring the Million Trees NYC initiative to green the street, plazas and parks.

- Differentiate species selected for planting on side streets from those planted on Water Street to optimize views to the river and appropriate fit for available sunlight and drainage conditions. Focus efforts on cross streets with the highest pedestrian volume including Fulton Street, Wall Street and Whitehall Street. Enhance existing and new public spaces with shade trees and landscape.

### 3. Enliven Front Street with weekend closings and regular programming.

- Make Front Street a lunchtime destination of choice with gourmet food trucks, regular programming and after-work events

### 4. Support links to the East River Esplanade with communal bicycle facilities.

- Consider locations for construction of a secure bike parking facility along Front Street with access to the East River Esplanade and Piers.
- Support property owners in achieving compliance with bike access regulations.





## SPACE TO PLACE: Repurpose public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life

The 41 POPS concentrated on the 10 blocks of Water Street siphon off pedestrian activity, making the street feel empty and thwarting retail and restaurant uses. Corridor-wide standards that encourage private investment, streamline the approval process and incentivize action are essential to activate and enliven the street.

## Recommendations:

- 1. Rethink the existing zoning for Water Street's outdated and unsuccessful POPS and arcades.**
  - Regulatory reform can be tailored to address the specific conditions of the study area while balancing public and private benefits. Potential approaches to achieve a better public realm may include any of the following:
  - Amend the zoning map to designate a special use district coincident with the study area and define a set of considerations and design guidelines for POPS unique to the district
  - Create a catalogue of reasonable and achievable best practices to address non-compliance in plaza and arcade design
  - Create an efficient and predictable process of review for POPS and arcade modification
  - Allow installation of movable tables, chairs and shade umbrellas in POPS and arcades as-of-right
  - Designate Water Street as a 'Retail Street' in the Lower Manhattan Special Purpose District
- 2. Overcome barriers to capital investment:**
  - Provide tax abatement for capital expenditure on additions and renovation accommodating new retail
  - Expedite permitting and conversion of existing ground-floor space at blank walls and large lobbies to active retail space
- 3. Attract and incentivize new retail tenants.**
  - Achieving an attractive retail identity that both extends and enhances street life will require incentives for early movers to raise the density and mix of active businesses.
  - Develop policy guidelines or zoning reform to promote active retail frontage
  - Provide signing bonus or employment tax credit for new retail establishments on Water Street



## DAY TO NIGHT:

Extend the hours of activity to engage daytime, evening and weekend populations.

Programming on Water Street should activate a network of newly redesigned public spaces along the street. Art and events for Water Street should capitalize on existing hot spots in the surrounding area, drawing people from transportation hubs, Stone Street and Wall Street. Creative, professionally produced programming with opportunities for active and passive participation will build a sense of community, loyalty and investment in the future of Water Street.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Activate Water Street with programming that appeals to employees, residents, and tourists alike.

- Schedule daily, weekly and seasonal events and installations to activate spaces throughout the year
- Position live events in advantageous locations to draw on and amplify the success of existing activity resonating from the waterfront, historic streets, and popular restaurants
- Partner with adjacent and district-wide businesses to attract customers through promotion and sponsorship
- Capture public attention and acclaim through innovative events that blend public space with active and passive engagement in technology, arts, music and performance

### 2. Bring iconic public art to gateway locations and public spaces.

- Enliven the street from one end to the other with curated, site-specific visual art that takes advantage of the rich variety of architectural and spatial opportunities
- Develop a sophisticated architectural lighting program with potential to draw public and critical appeal
- Curate site-specific art installations at strategic locations to enhance view corridors and transform the spatial experience of the street

### 3. Install pedestrian-friendly indirect lighting through street reconstruction funding.

- Make the experience of working, living, and shopping on Water Street an attractive one for existing and potential office, residential, and retail tenants
- Install Downtown Alliance standard pole-mounted lighting for the vehicle right of way
- Highlight parks and plazas with soft indirect lighting in pockets of landscape and street trees

### 4. Transform Water Street into the smartest street in New York City.

- Provide publicly accessible Wi-Fi with coverage in all open spaces and retail locations
- Install Next Bus intelligent route signage
- Leverage existing Downtown Alliance social and mobile media to drive traffic to local shopping dining and entertainment destinations





# OVERVIEW MAP



FULL SIZE MAP AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AT [WWW.DOWNTOWNNY.COM/WATERSTREET](http://WWW.DOWNTOWNNY.COM/WATERSTREET)



The mission of the Alliance for Downtown New York is to be the principal organization that provides Lower Manhattan's historic financial district with a premier physical and economic environment, advocates for businesses and property owners and promotes the area as a world-class destination for companies, workers, residents and visitors. The Downtown Alliance manages the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Business Improvement District (BID), serving an area roughly from City Hall to the Battery, from the East River to West Street.

## Alliance for Downtown New York

### Board of Directors

Robert R. Douglass  
Milbank, Tweed, Hadley  
& McCloy LLP  
*Chairman*, Alliance for  
Downtown New York

Hon. Michael Bloomberg  
*Mayor*, City of New York

Peter Braus  
Sierra Realty Corp

Harry Bridgwood  
New Water Street Corporation

Hon. Margaret S. Chin  
City Council member

Betty Cohen  
Century 21 Realty

John V. Connorton, Jr.  
Hawkins Delafield & Wood LLP

K. Thomas Elghanayan  
TF Cornerstone

David V. Fowler  
The Bank of New York Mellon

Michael B. François  
Port Authority of New York &  
New Jersey

Rachelle Friedman  
J&R Music and Computer World

Stephen J. Friedman  
Pace University

Timur Galen  
Goldman Sachs & Co.

Martha J. Gallo  
JPMorgan Chase

James F. Gill  
Battery Park City Authority

Robert J. Giuffra Jr.  
Sullivan & Cromwell

Lawrence F. Graham  
Brookfield Properties Corporation

Stanley E. Grayson  
M.R. Beal & Company

Francis Greenburger  
Time Equities, Inc.

John K. Halvey  
NYSE Euronext

Tom Hughes  
Resident Representative

Richard T. Kennedy  
Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.

Stephen Lefkowitz  
Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver  
& Jacobson LLP

David W. Levinson  
L&L Holding Company, LLC.

Janno Lieber  
World Trade Center  
Properties LLC

Hon. John C. Liu  
*Comptroller*, City of New York

Canon Anne Mallonee  
Parish of Trinity Church

Julie Menin  
Community Board 1

Cherrie Nanninga  
CB Richard Ellis

Dr. Antonio Perez  
Borough of Manhattan  
Community College

Peter Poulakakos  
Harry's Steak and Café

William C. Rudin  
Rudin Management Company

Frank Sciame  
F.J. Sciame Construction Co.

Alan M. Scott  
Deutsche Bank

Michael Skidmore  
Skidmore Associates

Allan G. Sperling  
Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen  
& Hamilton LLP

Hon. Scott M. Stringer  
Manhattan Borough President

Kent M. Swig  
SwigEquities LLC

Commissioner Robert W. Walsh  
Department of Small Business  
Services

Anthony L. Watson  
Emblem Health  
.....

Elizabeth H. Berger  
*President*, Alliance for  
Downtown New York

### Acknowledgements

#### Special thanks to the following agencies for collaboration and contributions:

Office of the Mayor of New York  
Hon. Robert C. Lieber

New York City Department  
of City Planning  
Amanda M. Burden, Chair

New York City Department  
of Transportation  
Janette Sadik-Khan,  
Commissioner

New York City Department  
of Parks and Recreation  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner

New York City Economic  
Development Corporation  
Seth W. Pinsky, President

### Resources

#### Further information regarding related best practices, policies and prior planning initiatives:

Active Design Guidelines,  
NYCDDC & NYCDHMH, 2010

Street Design Manual,  
NYCDOT, 2009

Water Street Study Existing  
Conditions, ADNY, 2008

PlaNYC, Office of Long Term  
Planning and Sustainability, 2007

New York City's Vision for  
Lower Manhattan, Office of  
the Mayor, 2002

Downtown East River Waterfront  
Concept Plan, ADNY, 2002

The Lower Manhattan Plan,  
NYCDDCP, 1966

To learn more about Water Street  
please visit:  
[www.downtownny.com/waterstreet](http://www.downtownny.com/waterstreet)

