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The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2012 was awarded to the Mayor of the City of New York, Michael R. Bloomberg, and the Departments of Transportation, City Planning, and Parks and Recreation, for New York City's remarkable transformation over the last decade. Co-organised by Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Centre for Liveable Cities, the biennial award honours outstanding contributions towards the creation of vibrant, liveable and sustainable urban communities around the world.

On 21 March 2012, Mayor Bloomberg delivered the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2012 Laureate Lecture at Singapore's historic Raffles Hotel. In his opening comments, he noted the similarities between New York and Singapore as "crossroads of commerce and homes to many cultures." He added that both cities were "energetic, restless, and forward-looking, constantly in motion, and constantly rebuilding themselves." Mayor Bloomberg commended Singapore's strong commitment to sustainability, which he credited to the leadership of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, after whom the Prize is named. The following is extracted from a transcript of his lecture.



Long-term planning is vital in New York City, and in other cities, too. Because with more than half the world's people now living in cities and with three-fourths of the people on Earth expected to be city dwellers by mid-century, cities around the globe, including New York, must confront all the effects of this urban growth: in transportation, housing, public health, public safety, education, and in so many other areas.

We also must work to enhance what gives city life its zest. Attractive public parks. Innovative public plazas. Exciting public art. By doing so, we can, as we've demonstrated in New York, reclaim outdated and derelict infrastructure elements for recreational use. Such projects can also be catalysts for private sector investment, creating jobs and producing greater prosperity for all our people.

So let me turn briefly to each of the three 'demonstration projects' that I think very rightly caught the attention of the judges in this year's Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize competition because of the way that they are accomplishing these goals.

Brooklyn Bridge Park

The first is Brooklyn Bridge Park. New York, as you may know, is a city of five major sub-districts, or boroughs - and with some 2.5 million people, Brooklyn is the most heavily populated of our boroughs. In fact, if it were a separate city - which it was until 1898 - it would be the fourth-biggest city in the United States.

Brooklyn Bridge Park, the first portions of which opened two years ago, is one of the most significant new parks to be developed in Brooklyn in some 140 years. Just as importantly, it's one of the most innovative parks created in any city in recent years. Here's what I mean by saying that: traditionally, city parks have attempted to remove park-goers from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Brooklyn Bridge Park does something radically different.

It brings park users right to the edge of one of the greatest, busiest harbours in the world - framed by Manhattan's dramatic skyline and by the classic elegance of the world-famous Brooklyn Bridge itself. It

gives them a front row seat to take it all in - as well as a wide variety of ways to enjoy themselves at the harbour's edge. And it's doing that by creatively reusing what had become relics of Brooklyn's maritime past: Six abandoned piers along nearly a mile and a half of the borough's East River shore. Once they were part of a thriving working waterfront. But a cargo ship hasn't docked at them in more than a quarter-century.

I could easily spend the rest of my time today describing all the striking and subtle ways that the design of the park accentuates this theme of adaptive reuse: The way it captures storm water to irrigate its landscape, for example, or the way materials found on-site were recycled for use in the park. Let me just summarise by saying that Brooklyn Bridge Park - the rest of which will be built out over the next few years - succeeds spectacularly in realising a new vision of what a park in an intensely urban setting can be.

The High Line

The same can be said, enthusiastically, about the second project for which we have been awarded the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize: The High Line. It was an elevated railway running for about a mile and a half along Manhattan's West Side. Once, it served warehouses and industries in this area, which is still referred to as the 'meatpacking district' - even though today, far more painters and software engineers work there than butchers do. Like the piers we just described on the Brooklyn waterfront, however, the High Line hasn't been a working rail line since 1980.

After decades of disuse, the opinion of many was that the High Line was an eyesore that was impeding the area's redevelopment, and had to

be torn down - the sooner the better. Incredibly, when our Administration took office in 2002, it was just a single court decision away from demolition.

Thankfully, a different vision for the future of the High Line prevailed: And through a combination of private activism and funding, and public investment and zoning action, the High Line has now been re-born as New York's first aerial park.

To quote the architecture critic Paul Goldberger: "Walking on the High Line is unlike any other experience in New York. You float about 25 feet above the ground, at once connected to street life and far away from it." Like the Brooklyn Bridge Park, the High Line plunges visitors into the very heart of a dense urban environment. Like Brooklyn Bridge Park, it also reclaims an artefact of the city's recent industrial past, and reinvents it for the 21st century.

None of this would have been possible without the ingenuity of a rezoning that gave property owners under the High Line value for their land. It convinced them that, far from being a blight, a re-designed High Line could become the organizing principle of a new neighbourhood. And that has, in turn catalysed, some US\$2 billion in private sector investment, transforming this neighbourhood into one of the hottest stretches of real estate in the entire city.

Re-purposing the Public Right of Way

The third of the three projects that has earned New York the World City Prize involves 're-purposing the public right of way': In other words, our new approach to using much of our 10,000 kilometres of streets and roadways. It's based on our Administration's strong commitment to dramatically shrinking the city's carbon footprint, to clearing our

air of the harmful pollutants produced by auto exhaust and also to encouraging a safer and more vibrant street life.

For those reasons, we've begun re-designing roadways to provide greater space and safety to travellers who aren't in cars: specifically, to cyclists and to pedestrians. Bicycling has become increasingly popular in New York. In fact, the number of New Yorkers who bicycle to work and school has doubled since 2007, and quadrupled in the past 10 years.

We expect the number of cyclists on our streets to continue growing - in part because later this year, we'll inaugurate the largest 'bike-sharing' program in the Americas. To increase safety for cyclists, since 2007 we've installed more than 430 kilometres of bike lanes in our city. We have, for example, established the first "protected" bike lanes in the United States. They move cyclists out of harm's way, putting them between street curbs and a new parking lane for cars. And because some auto lanes were narrowed in the process, drivers are more cautious, increasing traffic safety for everyone.

We're also reclaiming more public right of way for pedestrians. The most celebrated example is our famous Times Square, which, on average, more than 365,000 people use every day. Traditionally, pedestrians only had about 11% of the available public space even though they comprised 86% of the traffic. This created an unbearable crush on the sidewalks - and also a big spill-over of pedestrians into some of the city's busiest streets. And that contributed to a level of traffic injuries and fatalities more than 50% greater than on nearby streets and avenues.

So three years ago, we took the somewhat controversial step of

closing the major roadway through Times Square - our Broadway - to auto traffic. The results: traffic in the entire area now moves more smoothly. Pedestrians, who now have more than 41% of available public space in Times Square, are far safer. And there's also now an exciting new public space where only congestion and chaos existed before - a big plus for everyone. That includes economic benefits - because the new Times Square plaza, like the High Line, has greatly increased property values. In fact, since 2009, rents for street-level stores along the plaza have actually doubled - despite the effects of the national recession - and Times Square was recently named one of the top ten retail locations in the world. And Times Square is only the tip of the iceberg. We have 50 new neighbourhood plazas in development throughout the five boroughs that will transform underused local streets into vibrant public spaces.

PlaNYC

All three of these projects are elements in our far-reaching PlaNYC agenda for a greener, greater New York City. Implementing that agenda also includes everything from developing thousands of new apartments, as well as new parks, on formerly industrial sites on the city's 520 miles of waterfront, some of it complete and some of it still to come.

It includes continuing to improve the quality of our waterways - already cleaner than they've been in a century so that they become a more inviting resource for recreation, and also a home for the wildlife that reminds us that as humans, we share this environment with other living things.

We're making New York an even more public transit-oriented city than we already are, by making our city bus system faster and



more efficient and along several corridors, showing how streets can safely and harmoniously accommodate buses, bikes, cars, and pedestrians.

We've also funded from the City's own treasury the first major extension in decades to New York's famous subway system: a project that will transform the last major undeveloped stretch of Manhattan into the largest new transit-oriented business and residential development in the United States. It will accomplish for this district what the extension of London's underground did for the now bustling Canary Wharf area.

We've also initiated more new public spaces like those I've described today, projects that not only create a more environmentally sustainable New York, but that also make our city more liveable, more attractive, more exciting, and more economically competitive.

All these cutting-edge projects add to New York City's reputation for creativity and innovation. They make us a place where people want to come; especially people who are creative and innovative themselves. Talented people want

to live in the cities that not only give them the greatest opportunity, but that also offer the best quality of life.

Earlier this month, the Economist Intelligence Unit published an exhaustive study on 'global city competitiveness.' It named New York City Number One in the world - just narrowly ahead of London and then Singapore, let me add. The talent of our people, the study said, is what gives us our competitive edge. The projects like the ones you've honoured us for today as well as the ones like it that I've given you a brief glimpse of just now bring talented people to New York, and convince them to stay.

❶ **pg 24-25: People enjoying the vibrant public plaza space at Times Square.**

Photo courtesy of the Department of Transportation, the City of New York.

❷ **pg 26: Located at the harbour's edge, Brooklyn Bridge Park overlooks the Manhattan skyline and the famous Brooklyn Bridge itself.**

Photo courtesy of URA, Singapore.

❸ **pg 28: Originally a disused railway, the High Line has been transformed into an aerial park that runs through the heart of a dense urban environment in Manhattan's West Side.**

Photo by Centre for Liveable Cities.