

Site Manifesto

Although the Albany Bulb exists apart from certain urban systems (transportation infrastructure and networks, city designations of commercial and residential, and civic institutions such as hospitals, libraries, and schools) and in opposition to an Olmstead-era conception of urban landscape as bucolic respite, it acquires its own logic (a systems ecology) from the boundaries of its evolution and accumulation over time, its use and passage, its habitation, and its prospective zoning under the East Shore Park Plan. In this analysis, the Bulb includes surrounding aquatic conditions and contours; the growth of mud flats as a result of increased land mass and the indefinite nature of tidal shorelines make explicit the interrelation of systems above and beneath the Bay.

On the Bulb, edges inspire use. The boundaries of the bulb's episodic accumulation begins to describe path location; paths tend to adhere to former edges. (Paths, like flocking birds, maintain a minimal separation; not all former edges are delineated by paths. Paths work with or against, parallel or perpendicular to, topography.) Human habitation on the bulb occurs near the penultimate accumulation boundary. Steep topography and the rise and fall of the tide make the last edge, between water and land, unsuitable for encampment. (Steep topography on the neck makes the edges there unsuitable for all but adventurous passage and intentionally isolated habitation.) Over the decades, the shoreline has been eroded in instances of linear land outcroppings.

Edges swell in tandem; industrial in-fill accumulation provoked mud flat growth. Shallow lines of bathymetry follow the shoreline too closely not to have been affected by the growth of the land mass.

The zoning of the East Shore Park Plan traces existing conditions: sea level, mud flats, heavy human use (as indicated by path density), inaccessible areas. The plan might intensify these conditions, if, for instance, the shoreline is bolstered against natural erosion or the recreation zone is leveled to make playing fields, but it might also remain descriptive rather than prescriptive. In the Plan, areas of human habitation are left untouched (unzoned).