

Best Places to live in NY

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SHEFTELL



The 121st Precinct in
Staten Island, designed
by Rafael Viñoly
Architects

How New York City's
Department of Design and
Construction designs
and constructs our city



MASTER BUILDERS

If New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) commissioner David Burney looks worried some of the time, he has good reason. Burney runs the city organization in charge of upgrading, repairing and designing most of the public build-

ings and streets within the five boroughs.

Hardly a New Yorker knows DDC exists, yet it might be the most important city agency operating today. DDC constructs city-owned structures (with the exception of hospitals, schools and public housing), rebuilds streets and repairs the pipes that bring water to our homes and waste from them.

DDC oversees more than 600 projects, 200 of which are now under construction. Some recent ones include a library in Glen Oaks, Queens, an award-winning police precinct on Richmond Ave. in Staten Island designed by a world-class architect, a cobblestone street above a water main in DUMBO, a flood-prone parkway in the Bronx and a DEP mainte-

nance facility in Canarsie that uses collected rainwater to wash trucks.

With more than 1,100 employees including structural engineers, architects, community advisers and project managers, DDC approaches every job with precision. It has to. One glitch and thousands of lives could be interrupted.

While quality construction and design are a main goal, ensuring that city life continues flawlessly is another. That's no easy task, considering the department must replace Civil War-era pipes on Chambers St., and has completed over \$8.5 billion in projects in the past decade.

"The guy who built the Empire State Building said, 'Construction is the closest thing to war in peacetime,'" says Burney, seriously. "We know these projects can be very disruptive, and we work hard to make sure that city life goes on seamlessly around them. We have people dedi-

cated to working with the community so they know exactly what we're doing."

Operating as the design and construction management company for other city agencies, DDC treats them like clients. If the Department of Transportation needs a public plaza built or repaired, DDC builds it. If the Department of Environmental Protection needs a storm-water drainage system built in Staten Island, DDC builds that, too. While the DDC doesn't have signs or uniforms, if you see a new firehouse or an addition to a library in your neighborhood, you can thank them for the way it looks. They deserve some of the credit.

Here are six projects that show how DDC operates, and how construction, design and preventive repair contribute to New York's reputation as the best city to live in on the planet.

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JEANNE NOONAN



David
Burney

David
Resnick

Eric
Macfarlane

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A model of Steven Holl Architects' L.I.C. library shows great things to come



STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS

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Design excellence Citywide

Under Mayor Bloomberg's Design and Construction Excellence program, DDC has won countless international design and architectural awards.

Placing emphasis on the importance of world-class design for public structures, the program has ensured that New York stays at the top of other cities in terms of high-design civic buildings.

"The mayor understands that cultural buildings and a city's economy are tied together," says Burney, who has run DDC since 2005. "We need a walkable, livable city to continue to attract residents. Everyone wants to live in New York again. The quality of civic architecture — better libraries, firehouses, public plazas — is a major reason for that."

A library by Steven Holl Architects on the Long Island City waterfront across from the United Nations and a police precinct in Graniteville, Staten Island, by Rafael Vinoly Architects exemplify the program. The two award-winning New York-based architects win architecture's top commissions and prizes year after year. Holl has designed museums all over the world, as well as small cities in China. Vinoly's firm has done airports and stadiums in South America.

To have their firms associated with local

public-works programs on smaller scales than they normally design signals to the world New York's architectural muscle. Both projects have dedicated teams who work with the architects and DDC deputy commissioner David Resnick to complete the structures.

"Public work is an expression of a municipal government's attitude toward its citizens," says Resnick, who joined DDC with Burney. "If a city builds bare-bones concrete-block bunkers, that doesn't say much about how they feel for the people who live there. Even on a smaller scale, we try to find architects from emerging and less-known firms to build the structures around the city. This kind of quality in design is what sets New York apart."

Barbara Spandorf, a program manager for DDC's police/fire units, says

Vinoly's design is a new way to look at the precinct as a physical structure.

"For the local community, it's both watching over and welcoming," says Spandorf of the design's 90-foot cantilevered entrance portico. "It's a fresh and modern approach to the building type. Every part of a policeman's daily routine is considered in the building design."

Holl's design is a vision of light and shadow combining learning with community usage. On the East River, it will serve as an emblem of the city's bright minds.

Water main replacement Madison Ave., from 78th St. to 36th St.

Using the most innovative construction and pipe-replacement technology available worldwide, according to deputy commissioner Eric Macfarlane, DDC replaced a 100-year-old water main on a 42-block stretch of one of the busiest residential and retail streets in the world. It went off without a hitch.

Spearheaded by assistant commissioner for Manhattan Thomas Foley and Marie L. Jean-Louis, director of Manhattan and citywide program administration, the DDC contractor located Insituform Technologies, a Missouri firm that supplied polyethylene pipe that can be placed, lubricated and dragged through older, existing pipe to get water to flow more cleanly and efficiently.

"It makes a liner," says Burney, applauding the process as a key to preserving

the water system. "New York is so blessed by our water supply that protecting it is job number one. This technology has never been used before."

Access pits were dug along Madison Ave. for insertion and exit of the new pipe, which went into the older pipe folded, then expanded, to line the former main. Foley and Jean-Louis consulted with residents and businesses, as well with the DOT to ensure smooth completion of the complex construction job.

"We chose locations with minimal people flow, traffic and utility disruption," says Foley. "The pipe expands from 18 to 34 inches. The project took two years and covered over 2 miles. Who even really noticed? And what's the result? Cleaner water with faster flow for everyone who lives around there."

The polyethylene pipe being inserted by a DDC crew into the decaying water main on busy Madison Ave.



DDC

Step-streets look futuristic at Tiebout Ave. in the Bronx



DDC/BERNARD JAMES

Step-streets Bronx and upper Manhattan

If you live in upper Manhattan or the Bronx, you understand New York is a series of hills and valleys, and that some streets go up and down connected by stairwells. Well, those stairwells are actually still streets, put in places too steep for roads. They're called step-streets, and they're managed and maintained by the Department of Transportation. It's DDC's role to repair and rebuild them. Not as easy as they look to construct, step-streets often abut sewers, drainage and electric cables running in and out of adjacent buildings. They also have to accommodate New Yorkers with handicaps.

Lambert Monah, borough director for Bronx construction, oversees several step-streets, including Ely Ave., which has curving ramps to accommodate wheelchairs, and Tiebout Ave., both in the Bronx.

"These can be very beautiful additions to streets," he says. "They have deteriorated, so the rebuilding of the foundations are important to every neighborhood."

Remsen Yard Canarsie, Brooklyn

When the City Council passed Local Law 86 requiring that all new public buildings be LEED-certified (built to the highest green standards), DDC's Richard Brotherton looked to meet that challenge. Collaborating with Kiss + Cathcart Architects, Brotherton worked to make a maintenance facility for the Department of Environmental Protection the most state-of-the-art building of its kind worldwide.

Richard Brotherton headed up this project



For a water-use facility expending 6,600 gallons per day, Brotherton and team created a recapturing system with a "green" roof that reuses the water to wash trucks and hose down dust. An on-site water treatment facility will help save more than 1.4 million gallons annually. Other sections of the acre-size roof will house photovoltaic cells that will contribute over one-quarter of the building's electrical use. In addition, public space for workers employed at Remsen Yard is spread through-

out the facility. The internationally acclaimed building will cost \$41.5 million, all allocated from the city's Office of Budget Management.

"It's unbelievable when you think of what is going into this building," says Brotherton, an architectural throwback who has a photo of Louis Kahn on his wall. "It has a 20,000-gallon reclaimed water tank. There's an upper-level courtyard for the workers to eat lunch. Buildings like this not only help a city work, but they restore the dignity of the worker."



The roof at the Remsen Yard DEP facility has photovoltaic cells



Excess rainwater will be used to wash the trucks

DDC/BERNARD JAMES; KISS + CATHCART ARCHITECTS (2)

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Public plazas Frederick Douglass Circle, Columbus Circle, Manhattan; Roberto Clemente Plaza, Bronx; Humboldt Street Plaza, Brooklyn

People love a place to sit and ease their minds for a few seconds amid the chaos of New York. To promote public space, the Department of Transportation initiated a program to enhance and create public plazas all over the city. The program drew fast results. Columbus

Circle is one of the most popular traffic circles in the country, drawing thousands day and night. Frederick Douglass Circle, at 110th St. and Frederick Douglass Blvd., marks the beginning of Harlem. Bits of information on Douglass' life surround his statue. From above, the circle is a geometric work of art in a quilt pattern.

Headed by landscape architect Joe Sopiak, DDC has a Plaza Program unit to work specifically with DOT to design and construct these important public spaces. Coming soon: a plaza at the HUB in the Bronx dedicated to baseball great and community activist Roberto Clemente, an extension of Cooper Park near Astor Place, and Humboldt Street Plaza in Williamsburg. Landscape architects from as far away as Norway are part of the design teams.

"These plazas are going into communities that don't usually get served," says Sopiak. "They take time to complete, sometimes four to five years, but when they are done, they become permanent community fixtures that add to the quality of life. At least we hope they do, which is why we take every facet of their design carefully and seriously."



DDC oversaw the construction of Columbus Circle, one of the most popular plazas in NYC



A rendering of Roberto Clemente Plaza, which will be at Third Ave. and 149th St., Bronx



A stilling basin for outgoing water looks like a pretty park

Storm and sanitary sewers

Arden Heights, Woodrow and other areas in Staten Island

Most Staten Islanders know what happens on their pretty streets with big houses when hard rain falls. Their streets flood, their yards fill with water and their curbs erode. Some Staten Island homes still aren't connected to the New York City sewer system. Overflowing storm water creates little rivers running into driveways, basements and yards. The DEP, working with DDC, is working to change that.

DDC's director of S.I. program management, Nitin Patel, and his team work within the department's Best Management Practice (BMP) guidelines, ensuring proj-

ects use the finest environmental tools and strategies. They created systems for storm water to run off roads into streams and treatment pools so attractive they look like city parks. Some even have benches with flowers surrounding waterfalls flowing under stone bridges. DEP will spend \$25 million on a BMP system that will take naturally filtered storm water into New York Harbor.

"Some of the sewers will work off a gravity system where water will travel naturally to stilling basins," says Patel. "The basins will calm the water down so bad materials settle to the bottom, helping the treatment process. What I like is how pretty these areas will look. No one who comes by will even know this is happening."

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