

**September 25, 2008**  
**Committee on Waterfronts**  
*Intro No. 809 – In relation to the City Planning Commission*

Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Barrett and I am the Research and Policy Associate for the New York Industrial Retention Network (NYIRN). NYIRN is a citywide economic development organization that works to promote both blue-collar jobs and sustainable development.

NYIRN supports the provision for a waterfront plan – to be revised (at least) every ten years – with the hopes that such a plan would enable the City to best utilize the waterfront for its goals for sustainability. As the City's population continues to grow, the waterfront will be an important asset for waterborne transportation, open space and employment-generating uses. A comprehensive waterfront could help ensure that neighborhoods such as Sunset Park, Gowanus and the south Bronx retain their strength as places with active working waterfronts and areas for well-paying industrial jobs.

Over the past decade, the City has rezoned tremendous sections of its waterfront to encourage residential development. While the City may have had a surplus of industrial waterfront space at one time, we may be reaching a point where additional rezonings will undermine basic infrastructure and a sustainable economic future. It is now important that a comprehensive waterfront plan take into account the need to balance the needs of the City and land use decisions that will make the City sustainable for the coming decades.

The recent NYCEDC Maritime Support Services study showed that maritime support industries provide more than 11,000 direct and indirect jobs.<sup>1</sup> There are several times more industrial jobs in waterfront areas such as Sunset Park, Red Hook, Gowanus, Long Island City/Newtown Creek, the South Bronx and parts of Staten Island. While not all businesses in these communities are water-dependent today, they may benefit from proximity to waterfront in the future as the City looks for ways to decrease trucking by increasing waterfront transport. In addition, the City could also create opportunities for new jobs, including new green industries. For example, several recycling facilities which are already on the waterfront, can be a resource for emerging industries that rely on the reuse of materials such as wood, metal and glass.

The NYCEDC Maritime Support study calculated that 90% of goods arrive in New York's harbor by boat. Yet in order to continue to be a port city, we must maintain our waterfront

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<sup>1</sup> EDC Maritime Support Service Location Study, 2007, p. 83.

infrastructure. A comprehensive waterfront plan would give the City the opportunity to prevent the displacement of important maritime support services and related industries by strengthening current zoning regulations. Waterfront-specific zoning could promote active industrial uses and prohibit other non-industrial uses currently allowed as-of-right in M zones (including some big box retail, entertainment uses and hotels).

Many communities already see and welcome the job potential of waterfront industrial areas. For example, the Sunset Park 197-a plan calls for zoning to protect its industrial district and investment in "green" industries. The NYCEDC is currently engaged in a study to evaluate the industrial area of Sunset Park for an eco-industrial park. Similarly the "Working Waterfront" Committee of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is developing policy recommendations to:

- revise waterfront zoning to strengthen industry and maritime uses;
- prioritize transportation and infrastructure investments to link waterfront with other land use strategies, and;
- create incentives and/or financial assistance to support green business development along the waterfront.

Finally, any plan created under the City Planning Commission should take into account the resources and needs identified by EDC and other agencies, as well as the City's waterfront assets and its existing infrastructure. For example, the EDC maritime report includes valuable information about areas of active barging and necessary infrastructure such as dry docks.

In conclusion, we urge the Council Committee on Waterfronts to require a waterfront plan that:

- considers strategies for a sustainable city;
- retains well-paying industrial jobs, and;
- maintains the existing infrastructure to enable the most appropriate use of the waterfront use for industry and transport.

Any comprehensive waterfront planning should aim to best identify the areas of current industrial uses and allow development for residential and recreational uses in areas that are least appropriate for industrial and maritime activities. A comprehensive plan could enable the City to seize opportunities for growth and an improved environment that can be achieved through a vibrant working waterfront.

Thank you.



Testimony of the Municipal Art Society  
Before the City Council's Committee on Waterfronts  
David Schnakenberg, Ralph C. Menapace Jr. Fellow in Urban Land Use Law  
Int. No. 809 – In relation to the City Planning Commission  
September 25, 2008

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am David Schnakenberg, representing the Municipal Art Society. MAS is a private, non-profit membership organization that fights for intelligent urban planning, design and preservation through education, dialogue and advocacy. MAS strongly supports Intro No. 809, which would require the City Planning Commission to create a comprehensive waterfront plan every ten years.

New York City's 578 miles of shoreline represents a great opportunity to improve our public realm, sustain our maritime industry, and reduce our carbon footprint through decreasing our dependence on automobiles and trucks. For decades, the city's waterfront was all but forgotten. Over the last ten years, a booming real estate market and improved water quality have made the waterfront a target for redevelopment, making it possible for a terrific new public realm on the city's edge. At the same time, the Port of New York has experienced a resurgence in waterborne transportation, and increasingly plays a vital role in the region's development providing thousands of jobs and generating billions of dollars in economic activity. Balancing this diversity of uses on the city's waterfront and waterways requires comprehensive planning.

The City's 1992 *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan*, is one of the most successful examples of comprehensive planning in the City's recent history. The plan allowed New York to organize land use priorities as they related to the waterfront. Setting such priorities led to important policies such as creation of wildlife habitats and the establishment of waterfront industrial business zones that reinforced those land use policies. Future comprehensive waterfront plans provide opportunities to better link upland areas to plans for water uses.

Critical to success of future plans is ensuring active engagement from the many community and advocacy stakeholders whose waterfront knowledge and expertise can inform the plan. In preparation of future plans we encourage the adopted bill to require the City Planning Commission to actively seek the advice of those active in the waterfront community including maritime businesses, environmental advocates, recreational groups and others. It is also an opportunity to determine whether citywide targets for the water established more than ten years ago have been met, whether the 197-a plan recommendations of waterfront communities have been met, and whether changing conditions, such as possible sea level rises, require the plan to be amended.

MAS also believes that Intro 809's call for the incorporation of an assessment of waterfront resources invites a closer study of environmental impacts on our city's waterfront. Rising sea levels and the threats posed by heightened storm surge are significant environmental and municipal concerns, and factors contributing to those environmental threats must be incorporated into the SEQRA process. Renewing the waterfront plan to continue to reflect changing environmental impacts will serve to fortify the awareness of and strengthen advocacy to prevent long term and irreversible environmental harms. Moreover, the required statement of the planning policy, with attention paid to future development, will serve to inform a discussion of efficient water based transportation of persons and resources throughout New York City.

We support Intro No. 809 because unless we plan for our waterfront, we may squander the city's greatest natural resources, its waterfront. As we plan for our shoreline, it is critical to remember that New York City has a limited amount of waterfront. We must treat it as a non-renewable natural resource, as be careful not to site something on the waterfront, like big box stores, that can go anywhere else in this city.

Finally, a comprehensive waterfront plan of the scope and quality of the 1992 plan can be a model for the City to begin preparing a comprehensive planning framework for the entire city.



**Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO**

**THE METROPOLITAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE**

**Before the New York City Waterfront Committee**

*Thursday, September 25, 2008*

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of over 250 organizations working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education.

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance strongly supports Intro No. 809. This bill is a great step toward a well planned waterfront for the City of New York. It will create a disciplined, predictable and comprehensive land use planning process for our waterfront. As circumstance change, New York will be able to update its waterfront plans to protect the environment, promote a diversified economy and help create an accessible waterfront. Intro 809 calls for a revised waterfront plan to comport with the Coastal Zone Management Plan to be created every 10 years by the City Planning Commission.

In preparation of this plan we encourage the adopted bill to require the City Planning Commission to actively seek the advice of those active in the waterfront community including maritime businesses, environmental advocates, recreational groups and others. Using the rich and knowledgeable set of activists and experts that regularly engage with the waterfront will only strengthen the waterfront work of the commission.

The City's comprehensive waterfront land use plan, last adopted in 1992, is now overdue for a revision. With a timely revised waterfront plan land use errors could be avoided. A recent example is in Red Hook, where at the same time that the Economic Development Corporation issued a report stating that we needed more repair facilities for our growing maritime industry, an active graving dock was paved over for a parking lot for a store. A more frequently revised waterfront plan would also take into account changes in land use and climate. In 1992 very few thought about global climate change. Now we recognize that the rise in sea levels and the threat of storm surge are profoundly important waterfront issues for the New York metropolitan area.

Other cities around the nation take waterfront planning very seriously and have made it the centerpiece of revitalization efforts. The River Renaissance Program in Portland Oregon is a great example. Over the last twenty years Portland took the time to plan and think out what they needed in a waterfront and, by consulting with all parties involved, they created an accessible, environmentally friendly, and working waterfront. New York can do the same and Intro 809 is a very good start.

In addition, Intro 809 will help further the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's Action Agenda. For nearly a year our organization has worked to put together an action agenda representing the views and needs of hundreds of organizations with stakes in the waterfront. This agenda outlines the prime initiatives and goals we need to achieve to create a working and accessible waterfront. Virtually half of these recommendations are linked to City Planning's purview of the waterfront. They include

- 1) Sustaining and growing our working waterfront by strengthening maritime and industrial zoning districts, preventing lawsuits by providing residential deed restrictions that recognize nearby industrial and maritime, transferring development rights to preserve maritime use and to ensure future water dependant use, and allowing maritime easements to ensure maritime use in perpetuity.
- 2) The creation of a "One-stop-shop" for waterfront permitting. The confusing miasma of bureaucracy that is our current permitting system has been an impediment to rationale land use planning on our waterfront.
- 3) Providing a healthy harbor for fish and for humans. Its time we cleaned up our harbor, a goal we can reach with several innovative new ideas such as the restoration our harbors oyster beds. Nearly wiped out by pollution in the early 1900's, we now have a healthy enough harbor to reintroduce these natural water filters back into our waterfront. This combined with CSO abatement and a commitment to using clean boat fuel will help restore our harbor's heath to levels none of us could have imagined because it hasn't been seen in generations.

- 4) The development of a vibrant public waterfront with destinations and access routes that bring everybody to the shore.
- 5) A plan for the rising tide. We have all seen the terrifying images of Manhattan flooded by rising sea levels and potential natural disasters. Only by having a unified vision and a well maintained and monitored waterfront will we be prepared to face the environmental challenges looming on the horizon.

In order for these waterfront goals and projects to be realized the support of the legislature and the city is necessary and would be helped immeasurably with the enlightened planning that Intro. 809 would foster.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.



# Testimony of the Department of City Planning before the New York City Council's Waterfront Committee

## Public Hearing on Int. No. 809

September 25, 2008

Good afternoon, Chairman Nelson and members of the Committee on Waterfronts. I am Wilbur Woods, Director of the Waterfront and Open Space Division of the Department of City Planning. Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee in regard to Intro No. 809, the proposed amendment to Section 192 of the City Charter requiring the City Planning Commission to prepare and file a new *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* for the City of New York.

On behalf of the Director of the Department of City Planning, Amanda M. Burden, I would like to commend the Speaker of the Council and the sponsoring Council Members for initiating this legislation. The Department wants to express support for the updating of the city's *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* and following productive dialogue with the City Council, the Administration strongly supports amendments to Intro 809 that will direct the Department of City Planning to submit the Plan beginning in 2010.

The city's plans for its 578-mile waterfront have evolved steadily over the last two decades and I would like to review for you some of the major accomplishments of our agency.

In 1992, when the Department published the city's first-ever *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan*, it was issued as a "discussion document" and received widespread recognition as a balanced vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Then in 1993 and 1994, the Borough Plans for the Waterfront were released to add detailed studies of existing conditions, waterfront planning issues and recommendations for each of the city's waterfront communities.

The *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* addressed a range of citywide policy issues including the need to protect natural areas, guide waterfront development, and provide infrastructure improvements to support the working waterfront. The plan led to a new chapter in the City Zoning Resolution with the *Waterfront Zoning Regulations*. These regulations, adopted in 1993, recognized the unique nature of waterfront development, incorporated public access requirements, and increase the number of areas where maritime uses could locate.

Since 2002, the Bloomberg Administration has vigorously pursued the planning and stewardship of the waterfront. We have completed a New Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP) which lays out the city's policies for development and use of the waterfront. The program, a part of

New York State's Coastal Management Program, now recognizes differences in characteristics of individual sections of the waterfront and provides a strategy that is guided by a careful and thorough examination of uses appropriate to each location. To help identify policy priorities, the WRP designates and maps two types of coastal areas with special characteristics that were identified in the *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan*: the Significant Maritime and Industrial Areas (SMIAs) and the Special Natural Waterfront Areas (SNWAs).

The proactive approach by this administration towards reclaiming the waterfront has included rezoning the underutilized areas for public open space, housing, and mixed use; supporting the continued vitality of active maritime and industrial areas; and protecting unspoiled natural areas. Working with our sister agencies, we have made significant progress in implementing innovative plans like Greenpoint-Williamsburg and Hunters Point South that foster both continuous public access and more affordable housing, and East River Waterfront, whose innovative design and program will provide diverse communities with access to a world-class waterfront. New passenger ship terminals are developing in Red Hook and on Manhattan's West Side, and new industrial and maritime facilities in Sunset Park, and North Shore Staten Island. We are combining the revitalization of the waterfront with the enhancement of public waterfront open spaces from Barretto Point in the Bronx to IKEA in Brooklyn. By increasing the use of ferries and water taxis, we are encouraging more convenient access between waterfront neighborhoods and helping to reduce dependence on automobiles.

There is so much more to be done. We will continue to work on improving and implementing the various parts of the Comprehensive Plan, such as continued efforts to reclaim the waterfront for public access and ensure that waterfront open space is of high quality and inviting to the public. As we set the stage for a new Waterfront Comprehensive Plan, we will be helping the next Administration set its own priorities and agenda for balancing the benefits derived from sustainable development, environmental protection and public use. We look forward to working with the City Council on planning for New York City's waterfront and its dynamic future.

Thank you.