



Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO

On the Development Plan for Hunters Point South

THE METROPOLITAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

Before the New York City Council Zoning Committee

Friday, October 24, 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 prospect of developing Hunters Point South presents a unique opportunity for the city of New York to begin focusing on creating easily accessible and inclusive waterfront on the East River. With the passing of Intro no. 809 a few weeks ago, it is clear that the city is ready to take a fresh look at its waterfront spaces with the intent of intelligent planning that will maximize access, maritime use and the health of our harbor. With proper planning, the development of Hunters Point South could prove to be a template for how New York City develops its waterfront localities in the future.

The first step towards doing this is looking at access. In the plan being proposed there is limited access to the water for recreation. This space is a great opportunity to

expand waterfront access points in the city. Places can be created in the proposed waterfront park where people can actually touch the water and use it for recreation. The Long Island City Boathouse, for example, is looking for a permanent home. This would be a great place for that and similar water-access oriented projects, such as a town dock – a docking facility that would be open to the public.

Secondly, the wall of tall buildings continuing down the shore is an unfortunate way to build along the waterfront. The view of Manhattan from here is too beautiful to just give to a few apartment dwellers. Smaller buildings along the edge create a more inviting waterfront and allow for the development of a real community. As a part of this, we encourage a mix of affordable housing as well. The waterfront should be a place for everyone. The housing next to Newton Creek industrial is a bad mix. We should try to put a commercial buffer in between these two zones.

The easiest way to develop an inviting and well populated waterfront is to encourage a continuous string of commercial businesses along the water's edge. We want great destinations to draw people to the area. Vibrant locations like water taxi beach should be preserved and the water taxi port there should be expanded.

The development of Hunters Point South is a golden opportunity to create a diverse new community and a diverse urban waterfront to go along. Now is the time to begin committing ourselves to the creating of working and forward thinking waterfront spaces. Setting a strong precedent now, here in Hunter's point will send a signal to all of New York that we are finally beginning to look upon our waterfronts with a 21st century perspective.

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