



## **Maritime Facilities Are Critical For Our Prosperity—and Our Survival**

Testimony of Carter Craft, Director

Before the Committee on Land Use of the New York City Council

**October 5, 2004**

Good morning. My name is Carter Craft. I am the Director of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a network of more than 300 organizations in New York and New Jersey and we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Commerce and commutation aboard our waterways is growing, and thus so is our need for maritime facilities and graving docks as exist at Erie Basin. Just as we need places for taxis, cars, bikes or trucks to get their flats fixed or their engines and gear boxes rebuilt, we need dry docks and graving docks to help keep the waterborne network of our regional transportation system in a state of good repair.

No one can argue that Red Hook needs jobs. No one will argue that the Shipyard is underutilized. What we do argue is that the City is allowing the forces of real estate and greed to trump the public policy goal of opening up the waterways to the people.

As people are coming back to the waterfront, we are increasingly getting out onto the water, aboard tour boats, dinner cruises, passenger ferries and oceangoing cruise ships.

The commercial use of the waterways is growing not just globally, but also within our region, and we need to make sure we have the support facilities for ships and boats and tugs and vessels to help sustain this growth in the future.

To look at Erie Basin in isolation is to miss the big picture. For a city that has been rescued by its waterways **not once but twice** in the last three years – once on 9/11 and again during last summer’s blackout – we risk learning even more painful lessons in the future if we allow this plan to move forward unamended.

Right now there are only 5 such repair facilities for large boats and ships in the heart of our harbor and there are development pressures facing 4 of these 5.

- Across from Erie Basin in Bayonne, the redevelopment authority there is considering the creation of a family entertainment center on top of the largest graving dock in our entire region.
- Across from Manhattan, in Hoboken, the Union Drydock Company fends off proposals from developers every year, and soon an offer will come in that will be too good to refuse.
- At the Brooklyn Navy Yard, maintenance on those city-owned facilities has been so limited in recent decades that 2 of the 5 docks are in such disrepair that they will have to be rebuilt entirely.

Meanwhile, look at what the City is doing: We’re spending over \$300 million on new or expanded ferry terminals in 12 different locations to accommodate the growth in water commuting.

In July the City announced more than \$150 million in funding to improve existing and create new passenger ship facilities in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Just two weeks ago, the City announced a plan to create a large new Marine Transfer Station just across Gowanus Bay to handle recyclables.

And the Port Authority is investing tens of millions in a project to move containers from our area north to Albany and east to Bridgeport by water tug and barge.

What's clear, is that we are expanding our use of the waterways for commuting, for commerce, for trash transport, and for international tourism. But as we allow the destruction of all of these graving docks and dry docks, where will all these ferries, tugs, passenger ships and other vessels get maintained and repaired?

If any of these ships springs a leak, or a fuel line should rupture, or it should collide in fog or traffic we face the very real risk of having nowhere for it to go for repairs.

The danger here, and we are seeking the support of the Council to help address it, is to find a way to make sure that our City's strategies for transportation and for economic development are integrated with our land use strategy. It is foolish to invest over half a Billion Dollars in public money for new passenger ship terminals, ferry landings, and transfer stations and have nowhere to service the fleet which makes these systems work. Try running a bus line, but with no garage, or operating a bridge or tunnel with no place to tow the cars which breakdown at rush hour.

If we continue this way, if we let our waterfront development goals be dictated by the forces of real estate and insatiable greed, then we will destroy those critical maritime facilities which are necessary not just for our prosperity – but for our survival.

The Economic Development Corporation claims that they are initiating a study to assess our City's needs for Maritime Facilities, and we ask the Council now to call for a moratorium on the destruction of all graving docks and dry docks in New York City until this assessment can be properly done.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearings, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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