



Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO

On Zoning and Improving Infrastructure

THE METROPOLITAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

Before the Zoning & Franchises; Planning, Dispositions & Concessions Committees

City Hall, Monday, February 25, 2008 at 3:00 PM

Good afternoon. My name is Roland Lewis and I am President of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of 324 groups working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit, and education.

I'd like to thank the Committees and especially Chairman Garodnick and Chairman Avella for bringing us all here to discuss what we ought to do next to plan this critical area of our precious waterfront.

1. NOW IS THE TIME TO GET OUR WATERFRONT RIGHT

With history as our guide, the opportunity to redevelop the waterfront comes along every 50-100 years. The waterfront along this site is the largest missing link in the Manhattan perimeter greenway, and also the longest stretch of Manhattan with no place to dock a ferry or launch a boat. With plans afoot to redevelop the area just south, just north, and along the United Nations,

it is critical that we make this waterfront connection complete. To the north, there is very little waterfront access until you get to 60th Street, almost a mile to the north. The closest ferry landing is to the south at 35th Street, but there is no other landing until 90th Street, almost three miles away. If our waterways are to serve as the transportation resources we need, then a ferry landing in the vicinity of 40th to 42nd street is needed so as to connect with the 42nd Street crosstown bus.

When developers designed the Glick site at 36th and 37th Streets, they showed great vision in creating waterfront public space that is relatively accessible from the upland, and we should follow that model here too. In particular, the major upland connections and specifically the public streets through the development of the Solow site must be maximized and truly public.

MWA is currently working with nearly 200 waterfront experts from civic organizations, government, academia and others groups to develop a *Waterfront Action Agenda*, which will suggest solutions for a better waterfront on a variety of issues. Included in these items we recommend for the waterfront between 35th Street and 42nd Street:

- a place with food and fun for the community creating a waterfront destination point;
- a town dock: a facility where anyone can get picked up or dropped off by boat;
- a facility big enough to also accommodate visiting historic and educational boats to tie up for extended visits.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

One of the early recommendations coming from our Waterfront Works Task Force is to ask the City of New York, the State of New York, and the State of New Jersey to create a passenger and freight ferry master plan and implementation strategy, both to reduce congestion in the near term

and to ensure that we have the tools we need to use the waterways to meet our mobility needs should disaster strike again.

MWA's *Waterfront Action Agenda* mentioned above gives special emphasis to emergency access and egress infrastructure. As this waterfront is the eastern edge of the largest Central Business District in the nation, the redevelopment of this stretch of waterfront must consider and accommodate future high volumes of passengers and commuters as well as a contingency plan to move goods, which necessitates the physical capability for a wide variety of vessels to be able to dock.

2. BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the points about water transit noted above, we need to make sure that development in this City takes into account the limited –and expensive – sewage treatment plant capacity we have, both for the sewage generated by this development as well as for the stormwater runoff that is created. Given that this site will cover 9.2 acres, including 1.5 million square feet of office and retail space along with 4,166 housing units, to comply with the Clean Water Act and make our waters swimmable and fishable, we must take action to mitigate stormwater runoff and attendant combined sewer overflow.

SEWAGE

According to testimony by Riverkeeper, Natural Resources Defense Council and the Gaia Institute nearly a million gallons of sewage per day will be generated by this development. The 4,166 residential units (with 1.5 ppl. in each) would contribute 699,888 gallons per day (gpd); The 191,103 square feet of retail and community space would contribute 32,487 gpd; and the

1,532,437 square feet of commercial office would contribute approximately 191,554 gpd, for a total of 923,930 gallons per day of sewage.

Along this stretch of East River there are five Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) pipes, which together contribute more than 34 million gallons of combined sewer discharge into the East River each year. CSO #NC-041 (so named because it is connected to the Newtown Creek sewage treatment plant) is the worst-polluting CSO for more than two miles of East Riverfront. Development of this site and especially development in this part of the city should REDUCE the impact these sewage overflows have on our use and enjoyment of the waterways, rather than adding to the existing problem. This can be done by recycling gray water within the development, holding and retaining sewage on site during peak flows and heavy rains, and investing in the most efficient appliances and equipment which consumes water.

STORMWATER

According to the Gaia Institute, who are partnering with the City to demonstrate the natural filtration capability of oysters on Hendrix Creek in Jamaica Bay (as reported in the *New York Times*, 2/24/08), an inch of runoff from this 9.2 acre site will produce about 250,000 gallons of stormwater runoff. A so-called ten-year storm would produce six inches of runoff, and therefore a million and a half gallons of stormwater runoff, and risk aggravating the Combined Sewer problem of 34 million gallons per year along this stretch of waterfront by an additional 4.4% unless the developer and the City take steps to reduce the problem.

The Gaia Institute also informed us that they believed runoff could probably virtually eliminated

from the one inch storm with about 2400 linear feet of enhanced tree pits, swales, and other green intervention, with an installed cost of approximately 300K. Half an inch of runoff (the size of most storms over the course of the year), could be captured with 1200 linear feet of swales/enhanced tree pits at half the cost, or approximately 150K. This is truly a very, very small price to pay for cleaner water in the East River and our other waterways.

Overall, we have to start reducing the amount of water we are pouring into the sewer system or we will never maximize the recreational potential of our waterfronts and waterways. We also have to keep in mind that many New Yorkers engage in sustenance fishing, and they may not know that the fish and crabs they are eating may not be safe for consumption.

The approved plans for the Forest City Ratner development at Atlantic Yards include retention and reduction of stormwater runoff on site, and therefore this development should as well.

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