

Testimony in Regard to Hearings Having to do with Manhattan
Waterfronts
by Mary Frances Dunham

Based on my experience with many city layouts around the world and on a long acquaintance with Manhattan's waterfronts, I would like to support the new zoning proposed by the Department of City Planning in so far as it attempts to protect waterfronts as open space, but not in so far as it allows structures to be created there for any reasons other than for the most vital ones. This testimony applies also to the NYS Department of Transportation's plans for new piers near the Holland Tunnel.

I believe in the following water-edge policy:

Existing water-edge public sites should be kept open (unbuilt), even if they are derelict in appearance. New structures, even if only 8 feet high and even if they are water-related, should be forbidden because they obstruct a 180 degree water view. Only vertical elements that are natural (e.g., bushes, trees, etc.) should be permitted. Low, ground-level built elements (e.g., esplanade paving) and furnishings for safety and comfort (e.g., railings, lamp posts, benches, etc.) are permissible. Deteriorating piers should be removed or repaired only if they will serve as ferry docks or other truly water-related uses. No new piers that are not truly water-related should be permitted to clutter the view along water-edge land. While this policy restricts water-edge development to esplanades, linear parks and boat landings, it enables Manhattan, if not the whole city, to be ringed some day with a continuous border of truly open-view water-edge land.

The maintenance of existing public water-edge sites must be placed in the city's budget as public park lands. Present or future landscaping of these sites must not be compromised by private enterprises (e.g., restaurants, amusement parks, etc.), even though some sites might be temporarily activated by an enterprise rather than lie fallow, unkempt, and unattractive. Fallow sites, however, hold more potential for fair water-edge accessibility and for eventual quality landscaping than do sites occupied by privately owned, permanently built structures, be they ever so recreationally oriented or attractively designed.

In conformity with the above policy, I support the Clean Air Campaign's objections to 1) certain parts of the current waterfront zoning proposal of the NYC Department of City Planning; 2) the current design proposed by the NYS Department of Transportation for a structure in the Hudson River to protect the Holland Tunnel; and 3) the structural portion of the UDC/HRPC proposal for the lower Manhattan Hudson River waterfront.

Sincerely,

Mary Frances Dunham

