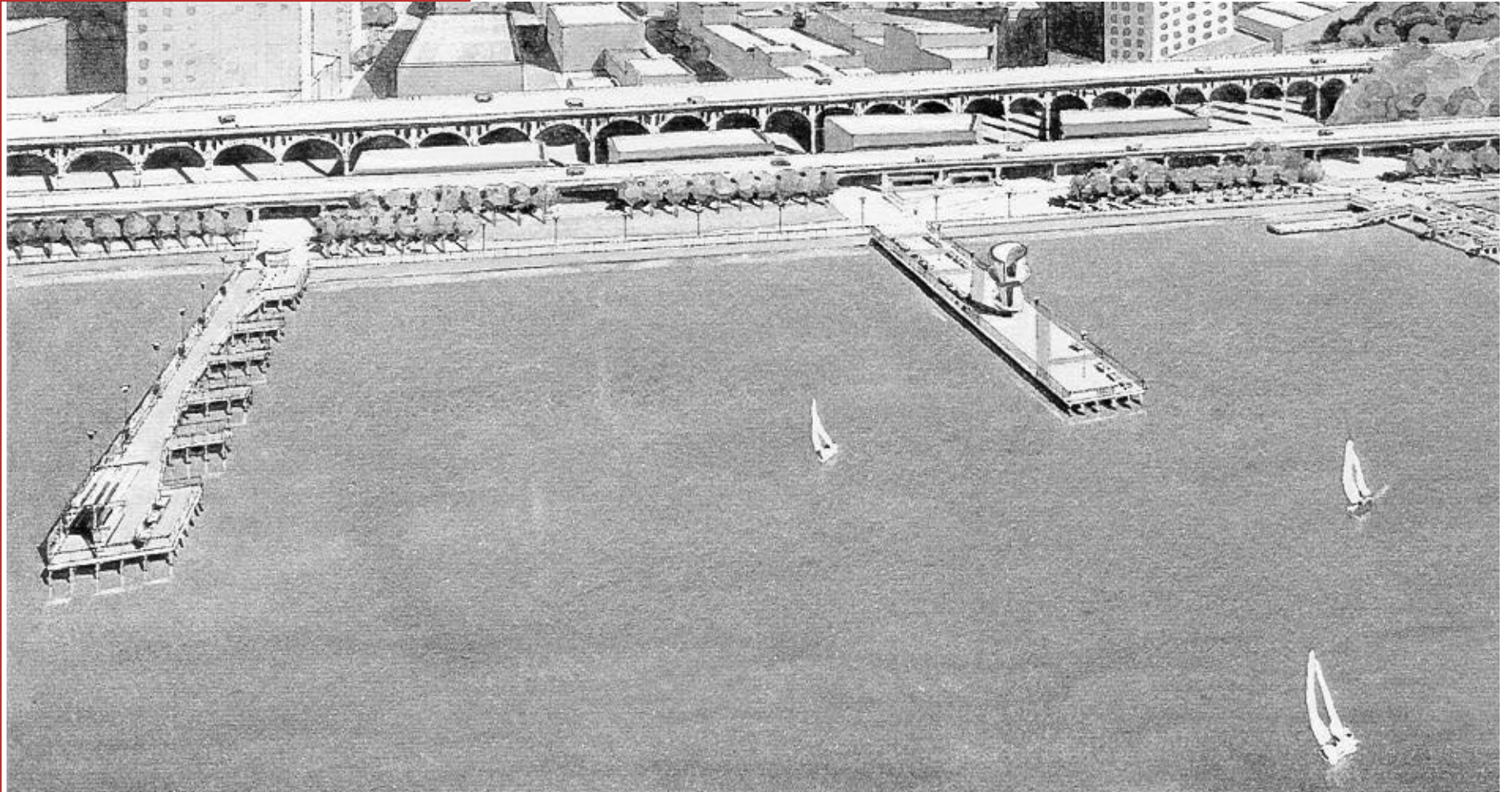


TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Message From the Harlem-on-the-River Sponsors: West Harlem Environmental Action, Manhattan Community Planning Board #9	16	The Project Unfolds: Timeline
6	Harlem Piers: A Historical Overview	20	Developing a Community Vision
8	Harlem Piers: An Environmental Justice Perspective	24	A Community's Recommendation
10	Faulty Proposals, Then Worthy Plans	30	Making a Vision Real
14	West Harlem: Organizing for Change	34	Appendix
		36	Acknowledgements

Published by WE ACT for ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, 2004

AKA West Harlem Environmental Action



A Message From the Sponsors of the Harlem-On-The-River Community Vision Plan

**Peggy Shepard, Executive Director,
West Harlem Environmental Action**

West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT)—an organization working to achieve environmental justice—is proud to present this book as a community-based perspective of the history, conception, and planning process behind Harlem-on-the-River, a project to develop the Harlem waterfront. Environmental justice draws together the insights of the civil rights and the environmental movements to address the unfair laws and policies which have led to disinvestment and disrepair in communities of color. The deplorable practice of directing the most burdensome, noxious facilities to low-income communities of color; and the pattern of channeling state, municipal, and federal funds away from communities that bear the scars of deliberate neglect most visibly, has prompted a loud response

WE ACT is a non-profit, community-based, environmental justice organization dedicated to building community power to fight environmental racism and improve environmental health, protection and policy in communities of color.

WE ACT accomplishes its mission through community organizing, education and training, advocacy and research, and policy development.



from groups around the country unwilling to bear conditions of patent neglect and blatant discrimination any longer. By demanding community participation in the decision-making processes that affect our health and quality of life, environmental justice ensures that bad policies are not foisted on our communities.

As such, since its inception in 1998, Harlem-on-the-River has involved the active participation of residents, representatives of community-based organizations and institutions, elected officials, local businesses, and government agencies to guarantee a just outcome for our community.

WE ACT facilitated Harlem-on-the-River in partnership with Manhattan Community Planning Board #9, with which WE ACT has

been engaged for over a decade. WE ACT believes that Harlem-on-the-River is a community-based planning model that should be replicated nationally to develop public space and encourage community-based economic development with state, municipal and federal funds.

As you will read, the community planning process entailed several community-wide meetings that culminated in a one-day design charrette. There, more than 150 community residents and stakeholders collaborated in drafting a community plan for development of the waterfront.

The Harlem-on-the-River plan represents the missing link in achieving a continuous greenway along the Hudson River in Manhattan. The Hudson River Greenway, itself the product of



WE ACT Board Chair Dennis Derryck

intense negotiations that took place among community and civic groups and various state agencies in the early 1990s, is a continuous stretch of pedestrian-friendly green space comprised by Hudson River Park from the Battery to 59th Street on the West Side of Manhattan, and Riverside Park on the West Side. Harlem-on-the-River is a vision plan to bridge these green spaces and enhance waterfront access, economic development, and regional transportation alternatives in the West Harlem community.

As we were beginning our organizing in 1998, the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) for the Harlem Piers waterfront site. Two of the development proposals called for a 33-story hotel and a 6-story motel. The community felt those uses were inappropriate and unresponsive to community needs. Through organizing, strong advocacy and support by civic and environmental groups, WE ACT and other concerned Harlem residents were able to persuade the EDC not to select either of the submitted development proposals.

In January 2001, the community won a victory when the NYC EDC announced that it would fund a master plan for the Harlem Piers based upon the vision developed by the WE ACT / Community Board 9-Manhattan community planning process.

Crucial to this project were Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields and former New York City Council member Stanley Michels, who both committed funds from their budgets to complete funding for EDC's Master Plan. By June 26, 2001, Secretary of State Randy Daniels and State Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Bernadette Castro came to the Harlem Piers on behalf of Governor George Pataki, to officially announce the awarding of state grants (for planning and pier construction) totaling \$800,000 to the

Harlem-on-the-River project.

On October 21, 2002, Governor Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields unveiled the West Harlem Master Plan at a press conference at the Harlem Piers. The first phase of development is slated to begin in fall 2004. There has been a commitment of capital investments: \$2 million from the city, \$4 million from the state, \$5 million from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, and \$500,000 from New York State Parks.

The West Harlem community, as well as Northern Manhattan neighborhoods, has many environmental burdens. Now we have the opportunity to experience a significant environmental benefit and to be another vital link in Manhattan's Hudson River Greenway trail providing waterfront access for all Manhattan neighborhoods.

Now, as a community, we must develop the infrastructure and capacity to program and sustain the waterfront park. Our objectives should include monitoring the design and construction, and supporting transportation and streetscape enhancements that will provide regional transportation options and economic opportunities. Our focus is to bring an aesthetic benefit that improves recreation, education, and quality of life for residents who have borne the disproportionate burden of municipal polluting facilities in Manhattan.

WE ACT appreciates the commitment that has been shown by Congress Member Charles B. Rangel, Governor Pataki, Mayor Bloomberg, Manhattan Borough President Fields, and former Council Member Michels to making this waterfront park a reality.

Hooray for the community residents and stakeholders who worked together over the last several years to develop, advocate for, and help implement a successful plan that is responsive to the needs of our community!

COMMUNITY BOARD 9- MANHATTAN

Jordi Reyes-Montblanc, Chair Community Board No. 9 Manhattan

The Harlem-On-The-River Project has been a source of hope, vision and pride for our community. Community Board 9 has strongly promoted this project, which will bring a better quality of life and improved economic development to the area.

Community Board 9 fully supports the concept and thanks West Harlem Environmental Action for their great contributions in making it possible to bring this project to fruition.

Community Board 9 encompasses the area from 110th Street in the South to 155th Street in the North, St. Nicholas, Edgecombe, Bradhurst, Manhattan, and Morningside Avenues in the East, and the Hudson River on the West. Community Board 9-Manhattan has the largest concentration of institutions of higher learning in the world, many famous churches, handsome neighborhoods, and a diverse resident community.

We Are Home To the following institutions of higher learning: Barnard College, Bank Street College, City College of New York, Columbia University, Jewish Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, Manhattan School of Music, and Teachers College.



We Are Home To world famous churches and attractions including: Convent Avenue Baptist Church, Church of the Intercession, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, The Riverside Church, Riverbank State Park, Grant's Tomb, and Alexander Hamilton's Grange House.

We Are Home To famous Harlem neighborhoods: Hamilton Heights-historic district, mostly homes and co-ops; Manhattanville, mixed uses; City College, large housing developments; Harlem Piers, industrial; Morningside Heights, universities, vintage apartment buildings; Sugar Hill-Trinity Cemetery, mixed housing (co-op, medium and small apartment buildings), best known for its jazz legacy.

We Are Home To a population from all over the world. The opportunity to share and

enjoy various cultures, ideals, and dreams is what distinguishes Community Board 9.

Community Board 9 has nine permanent committees that guide the work of the Board by addressing the interests of residents, businesses, and institutions:

Housing, Land Use & Zoning handles all land use, zoning, zoning variances, and housing issues and processes, as mandated by the City Charter.

Piers/Waterfront/Economic Development promotes area development, advocates in favor of resident concerns and coordinates events and projects to those ends.

Uniform Services & Transportation handles liquor licensing applications, street closings, and issues with the New York Police Department (NYPD), New York Fire Department (NYFD), Department of Sanitation (DSNY), and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

Senior Issues advocates, and monitors service and laws affecting senior citizens.

Youth/Education/Libraries advocates and monitors availability and quality of services for youth.

197-A Plan plans for development, growth, and land use for the district.

Landmarks/Parks promotes landmarking and advocates for various parks issues.

Communications maintains the website, produces a newsletter, and monitors and evaluates new communications technology.

Health & Environmental coordinates forums and workshops, advocates for projects, and reviews issues affecting the health and environment of the district.

The Harlem Piers: A Historical Overview

“The Harlem Piers was the anchor of the community back in the early 1900s. My elders described it as a vibrant public space with ferries coming from and going to Fort Lee and other locations across the Hudson in New Jersey. There were shops along the shoreline, and lots of people would go to the Piers to fish.”

Cecil Corbin-Mark, Program Director, West Harlem Environmental Action





Historical shot of Piers area



Harlem Piers, early 20th Century

The Harlem Piers area was first developed in the early 1900s with the arrival of the IRT and IND subway lines, and resulting residential and commercial development. Large warehouses and businesses, like the Interboro Coal Company and McCormack Sand Company and warehouses utilized the piers between 131st and 133rd streets. The rail line between Riverside Drive and Marginal Street — presently used by Amtrak— provided freight service to the entire west side of the piers, including the various meatpacking operations located in the area. The western end of St. Clair Place was used as a recreational venue and the Palisades Ferry and various other Hudson River excursion boats used the piers as their termini.

Construction of the George Washington Bridge and the Henry Hudson Parkway in the

1930s and 1940s resulted in the end of ferry and rail service in the Harlem Piers area. The new, elevated parkway isolated the riverfront from the neighborhoods above. The neighboring industrial businesses were relocated, and the piers themselves began to deteriorate. Eventually the recreational pier was demolished in the late 1950s. The meat packing industry had retained a solid presence in the area, but competition from Hunts Point triggered a steady decline with many of the old meat packing buildings now abandoned, dilapidated, or converted to alternate uses. Although access to the river has increased north and south of the Harlem Piers area, it remains one of the few underdeveloped areas in Manhattan along the Hudson River.

Harlem Piers: An Environmental Justice Perspective



North River Sewage Treatment Plant smokestacks, a few yards from the Harlem Piers



Current conditions at the Harlem Piers

Environmental justice is a social justice movement working within communities of color across the country: Communities purposefully targeted for noxious polluting facilities; municipal, state, or private disinvestment; and lax or non-existent enforcement of environmental regulations. Drawing together the tactics and insights of the civil rights and the environmental

movements, environmental justice emphasizes community mobilization, research, and advocacy to improve unhealthy, unsightly conditions. The Harlem Piers —located in Northern Manhattan between St. Clair Place, the Hudson River, 133rd Street, and Broadway— is a classic example of how policy failures can produce dilapidation, disproportionate pollution, and escalating health disparities in communities of

color. The success of the Harlem-on-the-River project is proof that communities can defend themselves against bad policies and resultant decline.

Dually crowned by the North River Sewage Treatment Plant, a facility that processes 180 million gallons of sewage per day, and the 135th Street garbage marine transfer station, which Mayor Bloomberg has proposed to expand and reopen, the Harlem Piers has long borne the burden of toxic sites and disrepair. But, in spite of the miserable, deteriorating conditions, which at one point included a collapsing bulkhead and upland walkway, the West Harlem community grasped the area's potential.

Nestled between Riverside Park to the north and south, the piers occupy an area of stunning panoramic views of the Hudson River, the Palisades and the George Washington Bridge. With an IRT subway station, five New York City Transit Authority bus routes, and immediate access and egress to and from the Henry Hudson Parkway via Marginal Street, which allows one-way traffic along the waterfront, the Harlem Piers is a natural hub of activity. Home to the famed Cotton Club (on 125th Street), and within walking distance of City College, Manhattan School of Music, Union and Jewish Theological seminaries, the area's assets are many.

Though the immediate Harlem Piers waterfront area is not a residential but a manufacturing zone, over 35,000 people (12,700 households) live in the surrounding area (approximately 15 blocks). Almost 30 percent of the population is under the age of 20. The ethnic composition of the area is diverse, consisting of Latinos (53 percent), African-Americans (39 percent), and Whites (5 percent). Despite its extraordinary natural assets and the number of people living in the vicinity, for a long while

this district was not the target, and therefore not the recipient, of investment from city and state government agencies involved in land use and economic development. While development, open space, and waterfront access exists or is underway along most of Manhattan's waterfront—to date, more than \$350 million has

been committed to build a new park along the waterfront below 59th Street— only after persistent advocacy and community-based organizing by WE ACT and Community Board 9 has the Harlem Piers been considered for investment, planning, and development that is

responsive to community needs and concerns. The West Harlem community had raised its voice several times, but unlike residents downtown, we were often ignored or undermined.

This initiative is a testament to the history of the West Harlem community's consistent activism around historic preservation and environmental justice—a movement that empowers communities like West Harlem to speak for themselves.



Fishing at the Harlem Piers near North River Sewage Treatment Plant and the 135th Street Marine Transfer Station

Harlem-On-The-River: Faulty Proposals, Then Worthy Plans

“The Harlem Piers is the jewel in the crown of Manhattan’s riverside. The interest to remake it into useable space has always been there. What was lacking was a financial commitment.” Marita Dunn, Manhattan Community Planning Board #9



Community residents and design professionals at City College Design Charrette



City College design charrette

Since the 1970s, there have been several proposals for revitalizing the Harlem Piers vicinity. The area has been the subject of many studies and development proposals, all of which recognized the enormous development potential and benefits of the location. The Port Harlem, Harlem-on-the-Hudson, and Academy Plaza Plan proposals, in particular, were grand-scale visions for the area that included the construction of a hotel, marina and ferry service, market rate housing developments, high-tech telecommunications establishments, cinemas, entertainment and sports venues, and facilities for nearby institutions, such as Columbia



University and City College. But these and other ideas never came to fruition because they lacked financing and/or community support or were environmentally insensitive and overly ambitious.

In the past few years, interest in the area has intensified among city officials, businesses, and community groups alike. In 1991, Community Board 9 embarked on a district-wide planning revitalization initiative entitled the “197-A Plan” that included the Harlem Piers. By 1994, the Harlem Piers area was designated as part of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone—the Clinton Administration program designed to revitalize distressed communities by using public funds and tax incentives as catalysts for private investment.

But the most concrete effort toward revitalization at that time came from the business sector. In 1995, Fairway Wholesale, one of New York City’s largest supermarket chains, merged with the meat wholesaler, By Choice, and opened a wholesale/retail market at Marginal and 133rd streets. With its extensive array of food choices and gourmet specialties, Fairway immediately became a community favorite, and attracted shoppers from as far away as New Jersey. Fairway filled a critical void for a community that was bereft of quality food choices. It also stimulated employment in the area by hiring residents from the surrounding neighborhoods. In order to make shopping even more attractive to its customers, Fairway asked the city for temporary use of the waterfront to be used as a parking lot for shoppers. The city agreed and leased Fairway a large portion of the waterfront on a year-to-year basis. This decision generated some community controversy as to whether this was the best use of prime riverfront property.

In 1998, at the same time WE ACT and Community Board 9 were beginning to organize

to develop a community waterfront vision plan, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) recognized the area's commercial and recreational potential and issued a Request for Proposals (RFP). By limiting the proposed site to the part of the waterfront that is west of 12th Avenue from St. Clair Place to 131st Street, the EDC required that the submissions be restricted to facilities that would house recreational activities, performance, educational programs, tourist information, and food services. Proposals for incompatible uses, such as parking and storage, would not be considered. Five developers responded, but EDC



complied with requests to delay its decision until the Harlem-on-the-River community plan was finalized.

At the same time, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) was completing construction of Cherry Walk as part of a West Side riverfront walk and bikeway along the river's edge. The walk connects and extends existing pedestrian and bike esplanades in the west 70s and 90s as far north as St. Clair Place. There, Cherry Walk should connect with esplanades that are to be completed along the Harlem Piers in accordance with the area's special waterfront zoning. The walkway/bikeway will also be extended north of the Harlem Piers study area reconnecting with Riverside Park.

In addition, DPR hired an architectural firm to explore the design of a bicycle and pedestrian path along Riverside Park called "Hudson Riverwalk". The path would run along the western edge of Riverside Park. It is a priority route of the Citywide Bicycle Network and Greenway Plan for New York City and will become part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway System consisting of a 350-mile continuous path from Battery Park City to Troy, New York.

During the early part of 1998, Community Board 9 completed its 197-A Plan, which included general and specific recommendations. The overall goal was to achieve balanced economic growth with community development; improve public waterfront access; strengthen

the area with uses that enhance the waterfront; increase community collaboration in future planning processes; increase parking opportunities to serve the Harlem Piers' establishments; improve public safety; encourage various modes of transportation; and stabilize the bulkhead. More specifically, the Board wanted to close Marginal Street to traffic, improve lighting underneath the viaducts, and prohibit parking along the waterfront. Community Board 9 called for an in-depth study of the area to explore development opportunities on and surrounding the waterfront.

By August 1998, WE ACT received a grant for communities within empowerment zones from the U.S. Department of Energy to develop a community-based vision for the Harlem Piers area. This enabled West Harlem residents and other stakeholders to embark on a visioning and consensus process where they would determine how this prime resource would best serve them and, ultimately, the region at large.

A visioning process, as its name suggests, is a strategy used by persons with different perspectives and diverse spheres of expertise to develop a collective vision of a particular project. In the case of the Harlem Piers, the visioning process involved community residents, area businesses, city and state agencies, educational institutions, and public interest organizations. In an ideal visioning process, a central body or bodies exist to ensure that consensus is not lost or compromised. WE ACT, in collaboration with Community Board 9, was the facilitator. Together, they served as sponsors of the project.



West Harlem: Organizing for Change

WE ACT is a non-profit, community-based, environmental justice organization dedicated to building community power to fight environmental racism and improve environmental health, protection and policy in communities of color

WE ACT accomplishes its mission through community organizing, education and training, advocacy and research, and public policy development.



WE ACT and Board 9 organize community exhibition

As developers rolled into town, unfurling their grand plans for this long-neglected swath of land bordering the Hudson, the Harlem community bristled. Almost instinctively, residents dug in their heels, resisting the sales pitch and fancy schematics. The Harlem Piers, though isolated and dilapidated, represented the flavor of a regal and storied community.

Some of the plans were audacious—a 33-story hotel and a 6-story motel on a strip where practitioners of the world's oldest profession boldly plied their wares. Others, like the 1988 Harlem Urban Development Corp plan for jazz clubs, luxury condos and a pedestrian promenade, needed a major overhaul. Negotiations wound down and details were never hammered out, and in the end, something kept giving us pause: Outsiders were designing, refining, configuring, contorting, and controlling our dream. Like well-intentioned sandmen, developers, elected officials, and city agencies were breezing into Harlem, impoverishing our imagination,

pinching our ownership of the process—handing us their dream.

Something had to be done.

Realizing that the piers area had been mired in disrepair, go-nowhere negotiations, and inspired but, ultimately, unsatisfactory plans, WE ACT and Community Board 9 intervened with a bold suggestion: Plans for construction on the Harlem Piers would have their genesis within the community and would come from a process that included community voices from the outset. Turning the typical model for dealing with communities like Harlem on its

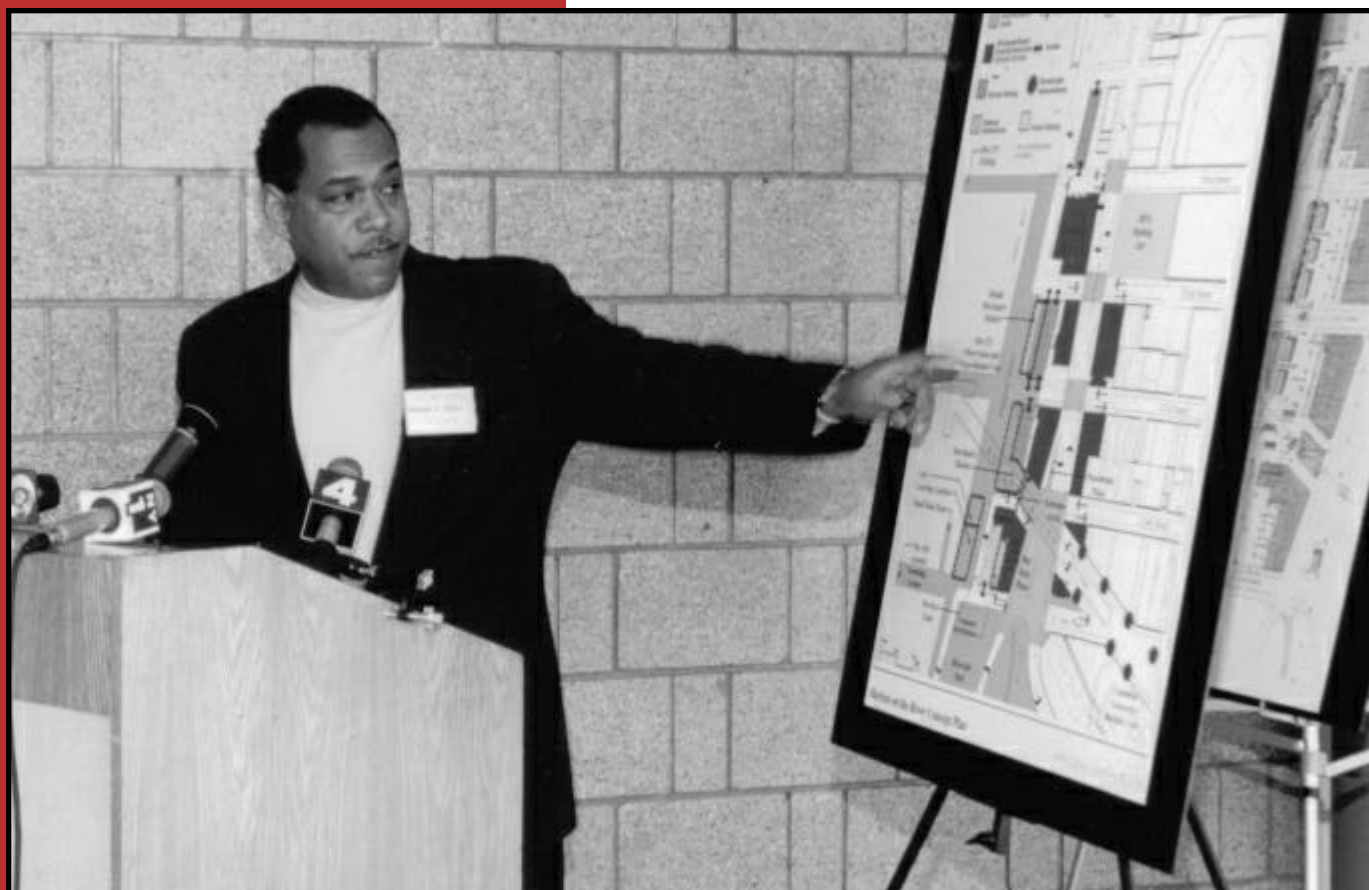


Congressman Charles B. Rangel addresses residents at Town Hall meeting

head, WE ACT and Community Board 9 created a process that invited a myriad of local voices to the table. Taking the issue directly to the community through a variety of its institutions—schools, churches, businesses, tenants' associations, and a host of community-based groups—WE ACT and Board 9 drew residents from around Harlem to supply their know-how, input, and vision and transformed Harlem-on-the-River into a community-owned project.



The Project Unfolds (Project Timeline)



Mr. Mitchell Silver, Urban Planner hired by WE ACT to facilitate the design process

The cornerstone of WE ACT's philosophy is organizing residents to speak for themselves. WE ACT works to build community power such that the leaders we mobilize are able to engage in the decision-making processes that govern their lives. Interfacing with city council members, state legislators, and federal officials, WE ACT facilitates access from the streets and barrios to hallowed halls and statehouses—proving that people who are given the right resources can play an absolutely instrumental role in shaping their destiny. WE ACT recognizes that without informed participation, sustainable community change would not be possible.

WE ACT moved quickly to organize the steering committee (see acknowledgements) for what became the Harlem-on-the-River project. The steering committee consisted of community residents, elected officials, community leaders, local business and community-based academic institutions, local development groups and organizations.



- Sponsors organize the first community meeting to include a variety of area stakeholders and residents.
- WE ACT mails a brochure on the project to recruit residents to participate; 200 residents respond agreeing to join the process.

Winter/Spring 1999

- The first community meeting is held drawing 200 residents, elected officials and the New York City Parks Commissioner and elected officials.
- Additional residents and other stakeholders volunteer to join the steering committee.
- A community design workshop, or charrette, is planned.
- Design professionals and environmental protection specialists are recruited to work with WE ACT staff to develop a handbook for distribution at the charrette. The handbook details the history and condition of the Harlem Piers.
- One hundred fifty persons participate in a six-hour charrette hosted by City College.
- WE ACT recruits members by attending local churches, tenant association meetings, and direct outreach to residents using the piers.

Spring 1999

- Additional community members who have expressed an interest in joining the steering committee are included. One of the goals of the project is to maintain a transparent process that prevents ambiguity and fosters trust.
- The ten designs created at the charrette are

Fall 1998/Winter 1999

- WE ACT was awarded a U.S. Department of Energy grant of \$35,000 for communities within empowerment zones to engage the community in a visioning process for the Harlem Piers area.
- A partnership is forged with Community Board 9.
- WE ACT secures the services of urban planner Mitchell Silver, of Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro Cambridge Systematics, Inc. and

Thomas Balsley, of Thomas Balsley Associates, landscape architects. As former director of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's office, Mr. Silver was familiar with the land uses, politics, key players, and organizations in the area.

- WE ACT and Community Board 9 develop goals and objectives, project timeline, and a steering committee.
- The Harlem Community Development Corp. agrees to host all steering committee meetings, which are held bimonthly.

reviewed by the steering committee. There are seven common elements among them. These elements serve as the framework to draft a composite plan.

- Project design consultants create a draft composite plan by incorporating teams' ideas onto one map.
- A town meeting is held at Columbia University to present the composite plan to the steering committee, planning teams, and residents for comment.
- This community vision is submitted to the EDC.



Residents chat at community exhibition



Aerial shot of community charrette

Fall 1999/Winter 2000

- Efforts to mobilize political and civic support begin.
- Accountability sessions are held to garner support for the Harlem-on-the-River plan over any other plans that may be in the works.
- Meetings are held with elected officials to gain their support.

- Harlem-on-the-River is promoted through presentations, radio shows, meetings with civic organizations, and press releases to the media.
- A celebration is held at Riverbank State Park where the final design and financial concepts are unveiled. An exhibit featuring the ten original designs and photos from the charrette are displayed.
- The event is widely covered by four television stations.

Winter 2000

- The EDC announces that it is scrapping their original RFP and will develop a master plan based on the Harlem-on-the-River community plan.
- WE ACT assists EDC in developing membership on its West Harlem working group, which advises the Master Plan process. The working group includes residents, elected officials, other stakeholders, and government representatives.

Spring/Summer 2000

- The West Harlem Working Group meets four times to advise the planning process.

Winter 2001

- Master Plan is presented to Community Board 9.
- New city administration takes office.

Fall 2002

- EDC announces beginning of design process.

Spring/Summer 2003

- WE ACT develops concept for the Harlem Waterfront Alliance and applies for its 501 (c)

(3) status. The alliance is formed for the charitable, educational and scientific purposes of overseeing and providing a community voice in the development and use of the Harlem Piers.

“It was important for me to be in the charrette. I was one of ten people from the Grant Houses. We are at the nucleus of the Harlem Piers area. We wanted to see Fairway stay and we wanted to find alternative parking off of the waterfront. Not only is Fairway a good market to shop at, it is a good job market for people of color. Two hundred plus people are employed at Fairway. Some of them live right here in Grant Houses. We had been waiting for something like this to happen for so long. We wanted to have something that was there yearlong not just seasonally. We wanted to have stores that were reasonable so that people in the community could afford to shop. We are right here on the piers, and we are the community. That’s how I got involved and I am so glad that I did. I would love to have that pier be a place that people in the community can use. I can imagine being able to buy something to eat, having a seat on a bench, looking out at the water and relaxing. That’s a pretty picture.”

Sarah Martin, President, Grant Houses Tenants’ Association

Developing a Community Vision



Community residents engage in planning process

Participant Spotlight:

"I am extremely impressed with WE ACT's ability to rally community support and get government officials to change their course. The charrette brought out the very best in community knowledge as well as the technical knowledge of consultants. I think that it was the catalyst for the productive redevelopment of this neighborhood because it redirected government agencies and it stimulated governmental expenditure and planning that will solve underlying economic problems. It really was a turning point for proper planning of the Harlem Piers area."

-Charles McKinny, former Riverside Parks Administrator

Community Meeting

In March of 1999, a community meeting was held at Columbia University to introduce the public to the planning process. Urban planner Mitchell Silver presented the history, opportunities and challenges of the Harlem Piers. NYC Parks Commissioner Henry Stern offered remarks.

Elected officials, including Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, State Senator Eric Schneiderman, Assemblymen Keith Wright and Herman "Denny" Farrell, and Council members Stanley Michels and Bill Perkins, were present to offer their comments and enthusiastic support to the initiative. Additional residents volunteered for the steering committee.

Community Design Workshop

In April 1999, about 140 people arrived at



Community residents share their ideas

the Great Hall at City College to participate in the charrette. Ten community-planning teams were formed, with each team assisted by one or two design professionals who volunteered their time and expertise.

To help the teams develop a vision, the consultants, WE ACT staff, and the steering committee produced a handbook that outlined the charrette's goals, the purpose of the initiative, background information about the Harlem Piers area, and green design principals for development of the Harlem Piers. In addition, several base maps were prepared to aid the teams in their design process. During the day-long workshop, the room was electrified with

creative energy as designers, residents, businesspeople, and students sat around tables to draft their vision for the future of Harlem Piers. At the end of the day, each team was given an opportunity to outline its planning philosophy, offer key recommendations, and present a sketch of its vision. The ideas were thoughtful and creative and ultimately directed the final concept plans.

All ten plans were then presented to the Harlem-on-the River Steering Committee, which reviewed the ideas and selected the best recommendations through a consensus-building process. As part of this process, the steering committee reviewed the ten plans developed by



Artist's rendering of waterfront path

the community planning teams. Seven objectives emerged as common elements among the plans. These common elements were used to form the “planning and design framework”—the goals and objectives by which the consultant team worked to develop a draft composite plan.

The consultants then took the list of ideas and created a composite plan, which incorporated all of the ideas onto one map. The composite plan was presented to the steering

committee and community planning teams, and then to the public for comment.

Concept Plan

After receiving feedback from the meetings, the consultants met with the project sponsors to finalize the composite into a concept plan. The landscape architects then advanced that plan into a waterfront concept plan for an area that encompassed the waterfront to 12th Avenue.

Implementation Strategy

While the concept plan was being finalized and the report was underway, the planning consultants worked with the project sponsors to develop an implementation strategy. The implementation strategy outlined the steps to be taken to advance the Harlem-on-the-River community plan.

Final Community Meeting

In June 1999, a second community-wide meeting at Columbia University provided residents and the public with an opportunity to discuss the draft concept plan.

Community Exhibit and Celebration

In December 1999, a reception and exhibit was held and hosted by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation at Riverbank State Park for the project sponsors to officially release the final plans and report, as well as to showcase the evolution of the community planning process. There, the plans generated by the ten teams at the community design workshop were introduced and displayed. The exhibit celebrated the final plan that earned consensus and praise from diverse groups in the community and launched the implementation campaign to help realize the community vision.



Community Board 9 meets to discuss implementation strategy



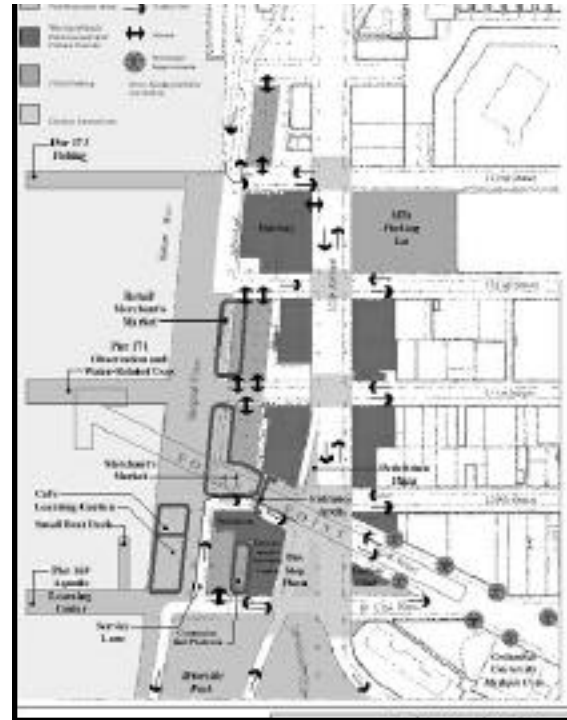
A Community's Recommendation

Planning and Design Framework

The planning and design for the Harlem-on-the-River project was approached with these ideas and objectives in mind:

- To create a broader landscaped area along the riverfront by closing Marginal Street to expand the amount of open space—here the public could take advantage of passive recreational activities like sitting or picnicking;
- To include a walkway and bikeway —a connection to Riverside Park north and south—





Harlem-on-the-River Community Concept Plan



Artist's rendering of community vision

and restore the piers for ferry service and other riverfront-related uses;

- To promote a vibrant wholesale and retail marketplace with entertainment, art, cultural, and environmental educational facilities;
- To improve traffic, transit, and pedestrian circulation patterns to minimize conflicts and increase safety and parking opportunities for all businesses in the area;



- To establish connections to a newly formed transportation transfer point to take advantage of the proposed ferry and possible Metro North rail stop;
- To preserve natural resources, habitats, and view corridors;
- To use special lighting to enhance the appearance of the area, especially under the viaducts;
- And to preserve and promote the architectural and historic character of the area;

Based upon the planning and design framework, the steering committee developed

recommendations in seven categories.

- Economic development and job creation
- Riverfront access, parks, and open space
- Transportation and parking
- Art, culture and education
- Urban design and streetscape improvements
- Environmental restoration
- History and architecture

Economic development improvements recommendations would help sustain the area as a local and regional destination, and create jobs and business opportunities for local residents.

The improvements would establish an 18-hour commercial district, which would consist of daytime wholesale and retail uses, after-hours entertainment, and passive recreational uses. Fairway market would remain in the area and be perceived as the daytime anchor for the commercial corridor. All new commercial uses would provide potential revenue sources to the 125th Street Business Improvement District that could be expanded west from Central Harlem to the Harlem Piers area. Our objectives here were to:

- Attract wholesale/retail uses as well as entertainment, art, and culture.
- Retain existing businesses that enhance wholesale, retail, entertainment, art and



cultural uses, and work with auto-related and industrial businesses to relocate to another area.

- Cluster new commercial businesses along 12th Avenue between St. Clair Place and 132nd Street.
- Develop a restaurant, outdoor café, and merchants' market along the riverfront.

- Expand the commercial development along 125th Street.
- Explore and evaluate hi-tech and research business opportunities.

Riverfront Access, Parks and Open Space recommendations would increase the width of the riverfront park and offer more locations for recreational activity, provide

access to the river, increase the amount of passive recreation, and connect to Riverside Park north and south. Our objectives here were to:

- Close Marginal Street from St. Clair Place to 133rd Street.
- Re-route traffic to 12th Avenue.
- Rebuild 3 piers (for fishing, recreation and water-dependent recreational uses).



- Create a riverside learning garden.
- Develop a bikeway/walkway at river's edge.

Transportation and Parking recommendations would reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict, increase the number of parking spaces available to present and future businesses such as Fairway, the Cotton Club, and Smitty's Meat Market, as well as improve access to the river-front area. Our objectives here were to:

- Re-route traffic to 12th Avenue and St. Clair Place.
- Create public parking above the MTA parking



lot and underneath the viaducts.

- Install a new bus stop plaza.
- Use one of the piers for future ferry service.
- Explore the creation of a Metro North train station at 125th Street.

Art, Culture & Education recommendations would introduce a theme for the district; offer educational opportunities to youth; engage artisans, musicians and caterers; and capitalize on the diverse culture of Northern Manhattan. The objectives were to:

- Use artists to design public art and streetscape improvements.
- Create an environmental center with a garden.
- Promote cultural diversity.
- Build on Harlem's historic and cultural heritage with a focus on jazz.
- Reach out to the local educational and cultural institutions in the area to foster linkages and opportunities.

Urban Design and Streetscape Improvements recommendations would make the area more cohesive, provide a physical and visual connection to the waterfront, and celebrate the area as a special place. The objectives were to:

- Visually connect 125th Street to the riverfront.
- Create a series of gateway intersections.
- Use lighting to punctuate key places and viaducts.
- Install a focal point for 125th Street on Pier 171.



Environmental Restoration improvements recommendations would increase the interaction with natural resources, expand the amount of green spaces and trees, and introduce energy-efficient building design. The objectives were to:

- Landscape the area along the riverfront.
- Use pollution prevention and green building design standards (see Appendix).
- Install native plants and street trees.

- Move parking and vehicles from riverfront.

Protecting the History and Architecture recommendations would preserve the character of the area, protect view corridors and promote the area's history. The objectives were to:

- Preserve and replicate the historic and architectural character.
- Establish a two-story height limit west of 12th Avenue.
- Limit development along the riverfront.

Making A Vision Real



(from left): Stanley Michels, Peggy Shepard, Assemblyman Herman Denny Farrell, Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Council member Bill Perkins, Marita Dunn, and State Senator Eric Schneiderman.

In February 2000, the EDC began developing a master plan based on the Harlem-on-the-River community plan. By engaging a team of experts in urban development, economics, and engineering, EDC assessed the waterfront areas between 125th and 135th streets, and Broadway to the Hudson River, and charted out a sequence of public and private initiatives,

starting with city-owned land on the waterfront and culminating in the economic development of the entire neighborhood called Manhattanville.

On June 26, 2001, Governor George E. Pataki announced that the Harlem-on-the-River project would receive two grants totaling \$800,000.

A \$300,000 Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant through the Department of State

was used toward the planning, design, and preparation of construction documents for reconstruction of a pier at the base of 125th Street. The \$500,000 Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act award administered by the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation will advance the construction of the West Harlem Waterfront Park, which will enhance the Manhattan waterfront esplanade and provide a waterfront anchor to the 125th Street corridor.

A year later, the vision and diligence of all who participated in the Harlem-on-the-River project was on the verge of fruition. On October 21, 2002 Governor Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields unveiled the West Harlem Master Plan at a press conference held at the Harlem Piers. The Master Plan, which builds on the Harlem-on-the-River project, is an in-depth study that incorporates guidelines for redeveloping the area bounded by 125th and 135th Streets, Broadway and the Hudson River in West Harlem.

There are three phases to the Harlem Piers area development:

Phase I, slated to begin in fall 2004, is the redevelopment of the Harlem Piers. It consists of multiple pier and open space improvements, and links to the continuous greenway around Manhattan. Currently, the New York City Planning Commission has created a Manhattanville Rezoning Task Force to consider rezoning the Harlem Piers area, the light manufacturing district bounded by Amsterdam Avenue on the west, Convent Avenue on the east, 126th Street at the south end, and 129th Street at the north. The State has committed \$4 million and the city has committed \$2 million to

this initial phase including \$500,000 from NYS Parks. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone board has allotted \$5 million toward the design and construction of the piers.

Phase II, will address traffic circulation, streetscape enhancements, and an intermodal center.

Phase III, will include economic and institutional development for the inland areas within the study area. According to the EDC, "Successful implementation of the Master Plan

will require many years and cooperation among government, institutions, the community, and private sector."

Community-Based Planning

WE ACT believes that community-based planning is an organizing tool for communities to reclaim the places where they live, work, play, pray, and learn. What is community-based planning? Simply, it is any planning process that engages residents and other community stakeholders in the act of envisioning, designing, and recommending future land uses in their



(from left): Gov. George E. Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields

neighborhood. Supported by urban design and planning professionals, this process empowers ordinary residents and other stakeholders in the community to forge a collective vision for their area's present and future needs. Community-based planning can have benefits for the immediate community involved and can improve community cohesion, foster a keen sense of civic investment, and make our communities better places to live in and raise families. Beyond these very important benefits to the immediate neighborhood, community-based planning can be the catalyst for a citywide planning process, which results in a more vibrant, efficient, responsive, and just city. The process documented in this book is one of the best



Borough President Fields flanked by Tom Hoover and Howard Glickberg, Fairway Market owners



WE ACT's Cecil Corbin-Mark addresses residents at exhibition of community vision plan

examples of community-based planning that has occurred in Northern Manhattan.

While in theory there are many mechanisms in New York to support community-based planning, in reality, resources and the political will are not sufficient to realize its promise as advanced by the City Charter. The reality is that communities, especially those that are low-income and /or populated by people of color, are often force-fed plans from developers or city agencies, which have no tolerance for community participation. In the case of the West Harlem waterfront, it has been community leadership, proactive organizing, and effective community-based planning that have transformed the traditional city-planning paradigm.

In order for our community's vision to become reality, we must ensure that the resources needed to build our waterfront park and vibrant commercial district are allocated in the budget; urge the MTA to plan a Metro North stop in the vicinity of 125th Street and the Hudson River; and work to close Marginal Street except around Fairway Market and the southbound ramp to Route 9A. We will continue to be vigilant about government accountability to our community.

WE ACT encourages other community-based organizations and municipalities to use community-based planning as a tool to proactively engage in land use decisions in their locations. In the Appendix of this publication you



Residents attend community exhibition

will find some resources that can assist your planning efforts. Good luck and join the fight to make our communities more livable, proactive, and sustainable.

Appendix

Harlem-on-the-River Resource Organizations

Following is a list of selected organizations and agencies that provide information and technical assistance in community design and planning:

American Institute of Architects

Megan Susman, Program Manager
Livable Communities, RUDAT1735 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006
202-626-7300
www.aia.org

AIA New York

200 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10016
212-683-0023
www.aiany.org

AIA New York State

235 Lark Street
Albany, N.Y. 12210
518-449-3334
www.aianys.org

American Planning Association

Peter Hawley, Outreach Coordinator
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-872-0611 ext. 1008
www.planning.org

APA New York Metro Chapter

Ethel Sheffer, Chapter President
c/o Neighborhood Preservation Center
232 E. 11th Street
New York, N.Y. 10003
212-228-7875
www.nyplanning.org

City College of New York

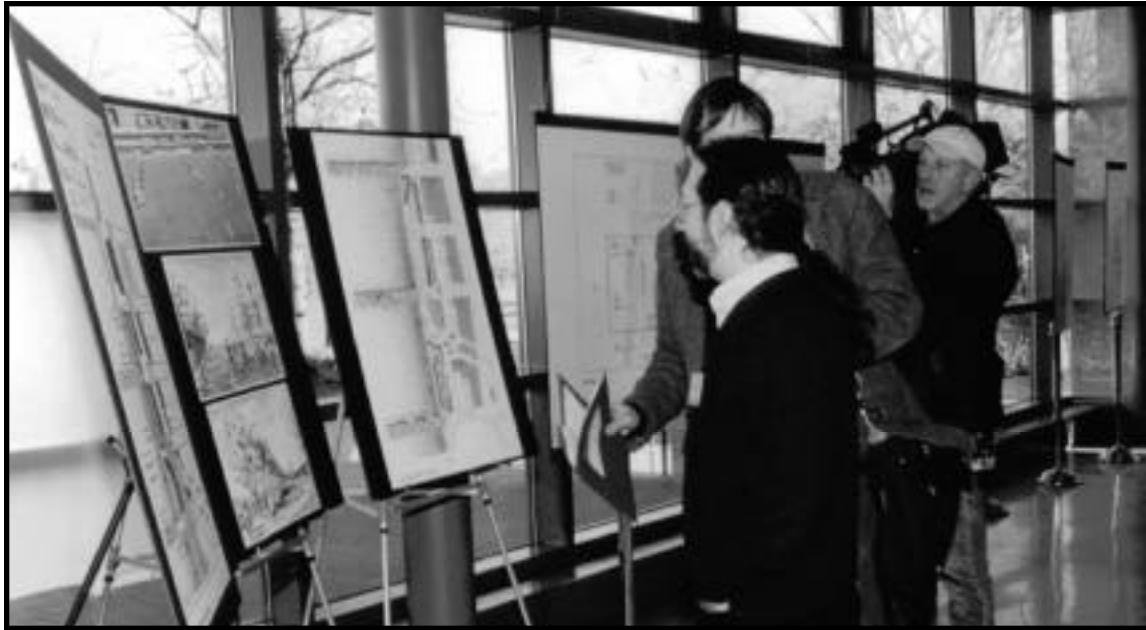
City College Architectural Center
Ethan Cohen, Director
Convent Avenue at 138th Street
New York, N.Y. 10031
212-650-6751
www.ccnyc.cuny.edu\ccac

Cityscape Institute

John Reddick
The Arsenal
830 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10021
212-360-1421
jreddick@centralparknyc.org



Reviewing components of the master plan



National Trust for Historic Preservation
Northeast Regional Office
Wendy Nicholas, Director
7 Faneuil Hall
Market Place, Fourth Floor
Boston, MA 02109
617-523-0885
www.nationaltrust.org

Pratt Institute Center for Community &
Environmental Development
Brad Lander, Director
379 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11205
718-636-3494
www.picced.org

Scenic Hudson, Inc.
One Civic Center Plaza
Suite 200
Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601-3156
845-473-4440
www.scenichudson.org

State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Faculty of Landscape Architecture
Richard Hawks, Chair
Syracuse, N.Y. 13210-2787
315-470-6544
www fla.esf.edu

Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Carter Craft
457 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022
1-800-364-9943
www.waterwire.net

Mitchell Silver & Associates
Mitchell Silver, AICP
145 Dunnell Road, 1st Floor
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040
973-762-2900
MSAplan@aol.com

Municipal Arts Society
Eva Hanhardt, Director
Planning Center

457 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 100222
212-935-3960
www.mas.org

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails and Conversation Assistance
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C.
20013-7127
202-565-1200

National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-588-6000
www.nationaltrust.org

Acknowledgements

Commitment, determination, perseverance, and vision have been the four pillars on which the Harlem-on-the-River community planning process was based. We are eternally grateful to those who demonstrated these valuable attributes and who contributed their skills, sharp judgment and unique insight to this project.

Project Sponsors

West Harlem Environmental Action,
Inc. Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

Harlem on the River Steering Committee
Mark Adams
West Harlem community resident

Valda Arbouin
West Harlem community resident

Barbara Askins
125th Street Business Improvement District

Wayne Benjamin
Harlem Community
Development Corporation

Stephen Campbell
formerly of City College Architectural Center

Cecil Corbin-Mark
West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc.

Juliet Davis
Convent Gardens Community Association

Tom DeMott
West Harlem community resident

Alexa Donaphin
144th Street Landmark Block Association

Maritta Dunn
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9,
and Manhattanville Tenants Assoc.

Hon. Adriano Espaillat
New York State Assembly

Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr.
New York State Assembly

Fernando Fernandez
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

Hon. C. Virginia Fields
Manhattan Borough President

Howard Glickberg
Fairway Wholesale

Charlene Gongga
Hamilton Heights Homeowners Association

Jim Hadley
AIA, Committee on the Environment

Tom Hoover
Fairway Wholesale

John H. Johnson, III
formerly of NY League of Conservation Voters

Carolyn Kent
Morningside Heights Historic District
Community

Christina Lee
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

Joyce Lee, AIA
AIA, Committee on the Environment

John Lepofsky
Community resident

Joan Levine
Morningside Gardens Residents Association

W. Frances Mack
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

Edwin Marshall
NYC Department of City Planning

Sarah Martin
Grant Houses Tenants Association

Charles McKinney
New York City Department of Parks and
Recreation

Hon. Stanley Michels
former New York City Council member

Hon. Keith Mitchell
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

James F. Moogan
formerly of New York State Office of Parks and
Recreation

Gilbert Oakley
community resident



Hon. David A. Paterson
New York State SenateHon.

Bill Perkins
New York City Council

Diane Phillpots
Harlem Community Development Corporation

Hon. Charles B. Rangel
U.S. House of Representatives

Jorge Reyes-Montblanc
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

Roger Reynolds
Citibank

Bob Roistacher

Morningside Heights Resident's Association

Ana Santos
West Harlem community resident

Hon. Eric T. Schneiderman
New York State Senate

Gwendolyn Scott
Harlem Community Development Corporation

William Scott
Columbia University Facilities Management

Peggy Shepard
West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc.

Walter South
West Harlem resident
Eduardo Suarez
ECHO For Sustainable Development

Rev. John H. Vaughn
The Riverside Church

Ernestine Welch
Manhattan Community Planning Board #9

Geoffrey Weiner
Columbia University Facilities Management

Canon Frederick B. Williams
Church of the Intercession

Hon. Keith Wright
New York State Assembly

Greg Watson
Harlem Congregations for Community
Improvement



Former Chairs of Community Board #9, Marita Dunn and George Goodwill, flanking Sarah Martin, Grant Houses

Planning Consultants

Mitchell J. Silver, AICP, Kenneth Bowers AICP,
Elizabeth Jordan Abels Phillips Preiss & Shapiro

Thomas Balsley and Michael Koontz
Thomas Balsley Associates

Harlem-On-The-River Design Professionals

G. Rogers Cooper, Patricia Crow, Herb Green,
Jim Hadley, Javier Robles WASA Architects

Robert Frederico, David Valenta
Gensler & Associates

Charles McKinney, Joshua Laird, Gail Whittwer
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Francisco Guzman, Wayne Benjamin
Harlem Community Development
Corporation

Geoffrey Wiener
Columbia University Facilities Management

Stephen Campbell
City College Architectural Center

Xavier Morales
Cornell University

Maxine Griffith, AICP

formerly of Columbia University

Green Building Design Standards

Jim Hadley, Joyce Lee
AIA, Committee on the Environment

Special Resources

Thelma Russell,
Chase Manhattan Bank

Betty Park and her staff at Manna's Restaurant

Emily Lloyd, Senior Vice President, Columbia University and Yolanda Moses, former president, City College, for their generous support and hospitality

The Harlem Community Development Corporation and Manhattan Community Planning Board #9 for hosting the Steering Committee's monthly meetings

Barbara Askins and the 125th Street Business Improvement District

Special Thanks

Evin Askay
Cleon Edwards
Damian Gaillard
Carlos Jusino
Dalece Lum
Claudia Marte
Alice McIntosh
Xavier Morales
Michael Springs
Melissa Springs
Harlem-on-the-River: Making A Community Vision Real

Editors

Peggy M. Shepard, Christopher Greaves, Cecil Corbin-Mark

Designer

Ed Towles

Cover Photograph

Adger Cowans

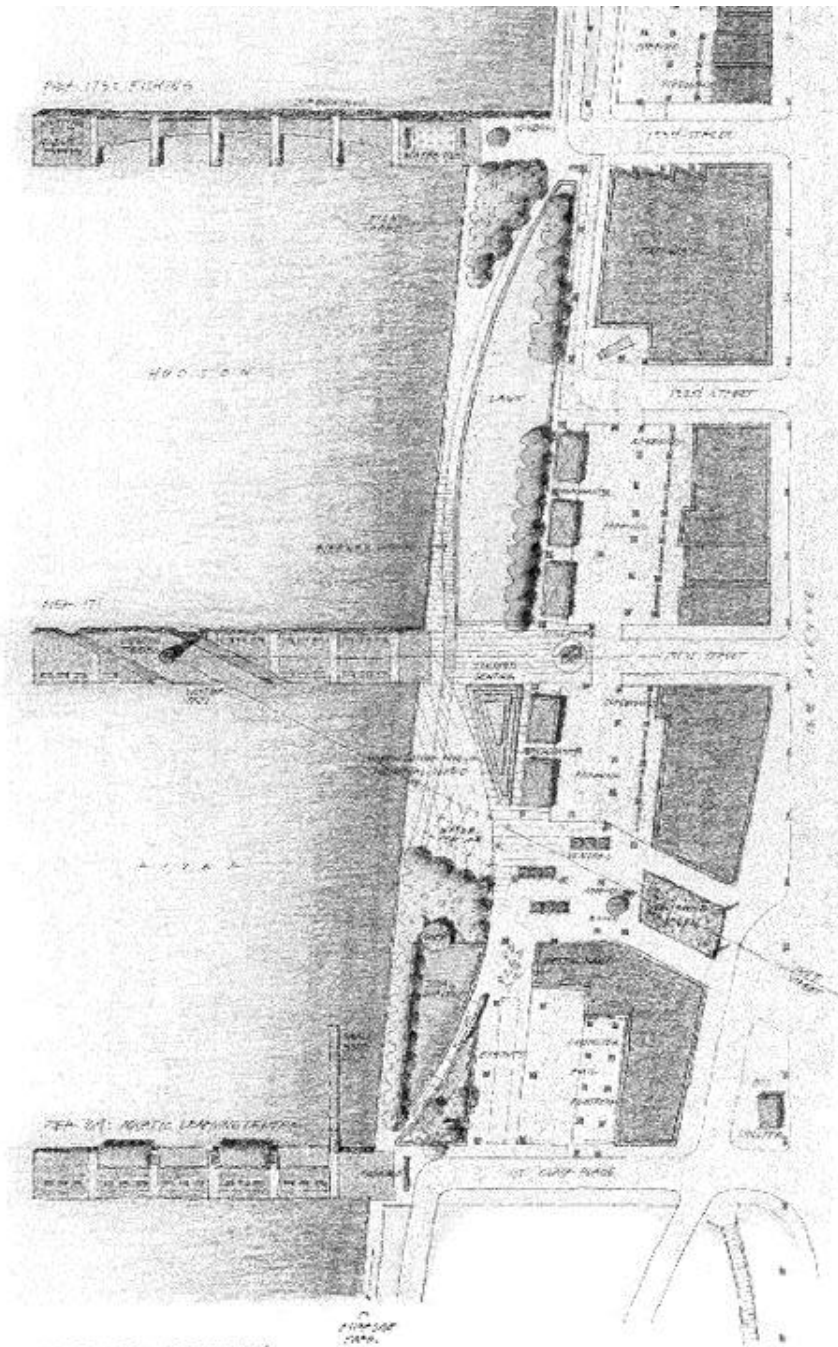
Photographs

Karl Crutchfield and New York State Commission of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The Harlem-on-the-River project was funded in part by the U.S. Department of Energy, the North River Settlement Fund, and the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund.

Publication of HARLEM-ON-THE-RIVER: Making A Community Vision Real was funded by the Hudson River Foundation.

To Order copies, please contact
Berlinda Durant at (212) 961-1000, x301 or
e-mail berlinda@weact.org.



WATERFRONT PLAN