



WATERFRONT COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP ZONES

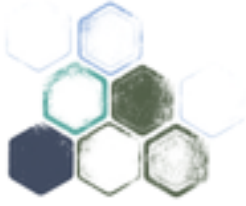
CAN WE REINVENT THE
WATERFRONT THAT MADE
NYC GREAT, A PLACE OF
ENTREPRENEURIALISM
AND OPPORTUNITY FOR
BIG AND SMALL?

Working in concert with city agencies, policy experts, and environmental leaders, this proposal seeks to empower communities, as stewards, stakeholders, and change-agents in realizing the socio-economic power of our waterfronts.

A PROPOSAL BY



CONSERVANCY NORTH



PROPOSAL

WATERFRONT COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP ZONES

A private/public solution for bringing resources, community organizing, and programatic life to neighborhood waterfronts.

The Challenge

Despite the efforts of various well-intentioned public agencies and private organizations, New York City's 520 miles of waterfront remain largely an untapped resource for both the city and its communities, particularly the underserved ones. For the bold community entrepreneur or council person looking to activate the neighborhood waterfront, a policy vacuum filled by a quagmire of overseeing agencies, daunting administrative requirements, and limited infrastructure, stymie the very well spring of self-determination and synergy so often recognized for its socio-economic powers.

It's not only the community entrepreneurs who hit roadblocks. Concessionaire agreements by city agencies and other landowners can turn into headaches for the agency and the community when concessionaires are not adequately held to public benefit outcomes. Between the throngs who leave NYC every summer to other waterfronts and agencies stretched thin, there is good reason to consider creative private/public solutions to help unlock the potential of our unique estuarial archipelago.

City government wants great waterfronts. Communities want great waterfronts. Community entrepreneurs need the opportunity for self-direction. The city needs efficiency and income, and the waterfront environment needs care. Can we bridge these needs?

A Private/Public Solution

What if we create conditions for neighborhood waterfront cultures to flourish? What if we harness the place-making capital of the community, along the lines of the artisanal sector that transformed parts of Brooklyn, in order to create authentic waterfront destinations that are integrated with the civic institutions and cultural flair of the neighborhood?

We propose Waterfront Community Stewardship Zones (WCSZ): dedicated places for community-driven engagement, stewardship, and water access. Be it a barge, ship, pier shed, or upland structure(s), these would purposefully incubate and honeycomb creative entrepreneurial activities. They welcome the community with infrastructure, resource sharing, and programs befitting our great public spaces. Maritime projects, small boat operations, habitat restoration and green innovation, cultural events, markets and locally sourced foods, make for unique destinations where the "social-ecological" bonds that undergird a sustainable economy can grow.

The framework, from RFP, to concessionaire agreement, to operator, should be aligned by sound, sustainable management principles to ensure optimal public outcomes, recognizing 1) The fundamental role engaged, informed, citizens play in the future of neighborhoods, as stewards, stakeholders, and consumers; 2) The habitats that support us must be cared for as integral elements of the urban ecosystem where biodiversity flourishes and ecological resilience is maintained; 3) The socio-economic potential of neighborhood working waterfronts as sources of jobs, environmental enhancement, tourism, and livability.

Net Benefits for Government

Today with livability as the calling card for top firms and talent, cities are increasingly taking steps to support and protect community stewardship. Cleveland, for example, has zoned an Urban Garden District to ensure that these areas are appropriately located and protected in order to meet the needs for local food production, community health and education, job training, environmental enhancement, and green space preservation. Can we do the same for our community's blue spaces?

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San Francisco property owners get a tax break for providing uninhabited land for urban farming. Can we create an official policy designation and/or incentives to promote dynamic neighborhood waterfronts.

For the city, in particular Parks, stewardship zones can bring infrastructure investment such as amenities, concessionaire revenue, expertise, and waterfront activation. Activated shorelines mean more people on the waterfront to support ferry initiatives and an economically viable transportation system. WCSZ can help reduce the city's permitting burden by channeling small-scale waterfront operations under the wing of WCSZ. Similarly FilmLA, a 501(c)4, takes a permitting burden off of the city while helping it get the most out of the movie industry.

Packaged into a clear manual, the WCSZ program makes it easier for council and community members to be effective change agents and stewards. —a critical ingredient of many city, state, and federal environmental/sustainability policies that recognize we are all in this boat together.

Models of Success

Seattle's Pike Place Market comes close to our vision of a sustainable community-aligned economic venture. This popular destination near the water is home to a fish and farmers market, and is mandated by charter to care for its own historic buildings, incubate small businesses, and provide services to the low-income population. The market's focus on supporting local independent business is unique enough to create both a community sense of identity—Seattle's "soul"—and a tourist attraction. Permeable private/public boundaries maximize use of space, balancing self-sustaining revenue with hyper-local programs. A network of quasi-governmental, public, an

private organizations oversees the market's operations whose annual revenue is \$16 million.

Closer to home, Pier 63 Maritime, now Pier 66 Maritime, has left an unprecedented legacy of civic activation on the NYC waterfront. Providing a culture of "yes" and real access where there had been none, Pier 63 inspired and served as incubator for many maritime projects and institutions including Waterfront Alliance, Friends of Hudson River Park, PortSide New York, Working Harbor Committee, NY Outrigger Canoe Club, NY Kayak Polo, Manhattan Kayak Company, Fireboat John J. Harvey, North River Historic Ship Society, historic tugboats, a shrimper, a schooner which made the longest, uninterrupted voyage at sea known to man, and the outrigger canoe race, Liberty World Challenge, and more. Today, rated one of the top 5 waterfront venues in NYC, Pier 66 provides 100 jobs, a great revenue source and amenity for the HRPT, historic ship and ferry docking, and programming space for cultural events—all at no cost to taxpayers!

Can the best practices of this model be replicated? Entrepreneurs say yes. Inspired by Pier 66, the Brooklyn Barge also balances commercial and community activities with historic ship tours, small vessel recreation, and environmental education. Imagine the transformations if neighborhood waterfront destinations such as these were facilitated by a government mechanism; and an ongoing participatory process were in place to nourish a regenerative synergy with upland institutions.

Increasingly cities are turning to specialized private/public mechanisms that produce net benefits for the government, private landowners, and community. With a significant waterfront constituency ready to help, we believe New York City is well positioned to take the lead on this policy recommendation. Currently we are gathering feedback from agencies, policy experts, and community advocates; and exploring existing waterside operations that could be developed into a WCSZ pilot site.