

On the Waterfront

You don't have to be particularly old to remember that once upon a time, New York's waterfront was a bustling place of commerce and corruption, a place where goods from around the world were placed aboard or removed from great seagoing vessels by men who didn't need steroids to develop muscle mass.

Those days, of course, are long gone, as are the blue-collar bars in Chelsea that were once the home of generations of longshoremen. Decades ago, the Port Authority moved the working waterfront to New Jersey, which has an undeniable geographic advantage over Manhattan's West Side and Red Hook in Brooklyn—it happens to be on the American mainland, which makes it easier for trucks and rail cargo to load and unload.

The city's waterfront, from Tottenville on Staten Island to the Hunt's Point in the Bronx,

remains one of New York's great treasures, but its potential has been tapped only in fits and starts over the past few decades. Now Mayor Bloomberg and Council Speaker Christine Quinn want to change that: They've released a long-term plan to develop significant portions of the city's 520 miles of waterfront.

The plan calls for a mixture of recreational and maritime uses in nearly 60 locations in all five boroughs. Many of the projects in the plan are either already under way or had been proposed earlier in piecemeal fashion. The Bloomberg-Quinn plan synthesizes these separate plans, including an esplanade along the East River, to create a more comprehensive view of the waterfront as an engine for recreation as well as for development.

The plan comes at a time when the Bloomberg administration has been showing signs of developing the dread disease known

as third-termitis. It proved disastrous for Ed Koch, Alfonse D'Amato, Mario Cuomo and George Pataki, each of whom seemed to run out of steam and ideas early on during what proved to be their final terms in office. Mr. Bloomberg, who doesn't have the option of running for a fourth term because of term limits, seemed distracted and just a little persnickety in recent months, leading people to wonder if he has grown weary of his job.

With the waterfront plan, however, it seems as though big ideas and visionary proposals are back in vogue in City Hall. That's a good thing, because the city can ill afford a couple of years of policy stagnation while New York's political class tries to identify Mr. Bloomberg's successor. Mike Bloomberg will be mayor for nearly three more years. If he continues to think big, they will be memorable years indeed.

Editorial

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