

Carolina Salguero Testimony
New York City Council Committee on Waterfronts
and Land Use Subcommittee Landmarks, Public Siting, Maritime Uses
12/14/06 Hearing: South Brooklyn's Working Waterfront

Thank you for this opportunity to address you and for devoting time to a misunderstood topic: the working waterfront.

My name is Carolina Salguero. The New York City waterfront has been my specialty for 9 years, as journalist, as an activist on behalf of recreational boating and of the working waterfront, and as a recreational boater. I am the founder and director of a waterfront-oriented non-profit PortSide NewYork. We are in Red Hook, Brooklyn but speak to issues and stakeholders harbor-wide.

In 2006, with the acquisition of our new home the 172 foot tanker *Mary Whalen*, PortSide moved from being an organization that studies and interprets the working waterfront to being part of it. I regularly deal with shipyards and marine suppliers as part of maintaining the vessel. The tanker will be a landing for other boats, so I confer with many vessel types regularly. The working waterfront is feeling pinched by lack of adequate space, and so are we. We've been waiting nine months for repairs due to the shortage of shipyards, since many have been forced out by eminent domain or gentrification.

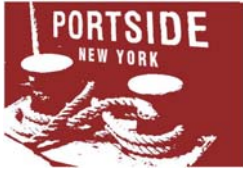
Sustainability and the Harbor's Role as our 6th Borough:

Our topic today, South Brooklyn's working waterfront, cannot be considered separately from the city as a whole. The harbor constitutes a 6th borough, as the blogger Tugster put it. Smart development means making smart plans for the watery borough and not just a patchwork of plans for the rim.

Mayor Bloomberg's speech Tuesday about sustainability said it well. He said we need "not a long-term plan for land use, but a long-term plan for sustainability." That means a good plan for the water, and for moving goods and people by water, which means really rethinking how we do things.

The mayor noted that New Yorkers suffer the highest asthma hospitalization rates in the country. Asthma is connected to air pollution, truck exhaust is a leading cause of air pollution.

The mayor also cited New York's traffic problems. The greenest way to move freight is waterborne transportation. A barge carries the equivalent of dozens of tractor trailer trucks. A barge requires less fuel, produces less exhaust, and contributes no traffic congestion, no noise on city streets, and no wear and tear on roads and bridges. Freight ferries, and combined freight-passenger ferries, hold a major unexplored solution to our congestion. We have only one freight ferry in NYC, the boat that supplies sleepy Governor's Island. We are behind the times.



South Brooklyn's Maritime Assets:

South Brooklyn is an irreplaceable asset as a working waterfront. Saying this does not argue for the status quo but for furthering its maritime potential, and in new ways. South Brooklyn has the last cargo handling piers in the central city. They are close to a major highway. Red Hook and Sunset Park have deep water berths that are a straight shot to the sea and the large staging area of the Upper Bay, vs. the ports of Newark and Elizabeth which are hard for today's huge containerhips to access due to the narrow, shallow Kill Van Kull, the low height of the Bayonne Bridge, the hard right turn after that bridge. South Brooklyn also has two protected deep water basins, Erie Basin, the largest such facility on the east coast, and Atlantic Basin.

PortSide's Plans:

The Atlantic Basin is well-suited for cargo use, but the EDC has plans to make it a maritime themed weekend destination. Given those changes for the basin, PortSide responded to the Atlantic Basin RFEI with a proposal that combines working waterfront amenities within the context of the "new" waterfront: a landing for workboats and charterboats, a waterfront museum, a marine career center, locally oriented retail including a bait and tackle shop and bookstore, water-themed cultural and youth programs, and more..

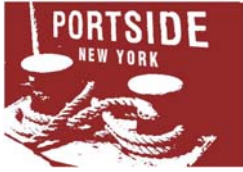
Our philosophy is to join the revitalization of New York City's waterfront and create new waterside public spaces and activities without displacing the maritime functions essential to the city's transportation infrastructure. Despite common notions that the working waterfront is dead, local marine businesses are growing, but they struggle with a lack of waterfront land. In Spring 2005, PortSide New York surveyed the local workboat sector, primarily tugs and barges, and shared the results with the EDC. All companies were expanding their fleets and refurbishing older boats.

We support plans—currently in short supply—that blend the new and the old without pushing out the working waterfront by introducing incompatible neighbors or rezoning. We believe a mixed-use waterfront can be both interesting and sustainable, but shaping the mix requires care.

One of our strategies is to make maritime an attraction via physical improvements—gussying it up (as the EDC has done with its design for the Sunset Park Hugo Neu recycling center)—and by adding interpretation, tours and educational experiences. We are conducting the research necessary to create New York City's first maritime trail. Our first tours of the tanker Mary Whalen, part of October's openhousenewyork weekend, were mobbed: 500 adults and 135 children visited the tanker while she was temporarily berthed in the Red Hook Containerport. Visitors were fascinated by the vessel and the passing ship traffic, and eager to learn about the adjoining lumberport and containerport.

Contested Territory:

Our home South Brooklyn is contested territory. Many voices reason that if manufacturing is on the decline, it's logical to convert waterfront m-zones to housing. In our view, not necessarily: as we import more goods from overseas, we need a more robust distribution and warehousing



system; and the waterfront, as the place where goods arrive, is where to site this critical infrastructure.

The paradox is that the boom in home building—and rebuilding Ground Zero—requires more working waterfront. Many construction materials can only come by water, and arrive in South Brooklyn: lumber and the components of cement (concrete, sand and stone) are all handled at the Red Hook Containerport, Erie Basin, and Gowanus Bay.

A growing population means more fuel consumption for heat, transportation, electricity. Red Hook is central to the fuel transportation business since Reinauer, one of the region's leading movers of fuel, has their docks in Erie Basin. Sunset Park has the largest floating power plant system in the world. Additionally, the NY-NJ port is the northeast's center for fuel refining and distribution; we are the largest petroleum through-port in the US.

Waterfront Land Use Planning is Freight Policy Planning:

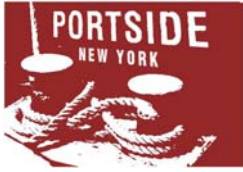
As we import more and more goods from overseas (by ship), our need for a rational freight policy becomes acute. Simply put, we need freight to land closer to its ultimate destination. This means that South Brooklyn, which has the last cargo piers in the central city, should receive Brooklyn-bound cargo, New York City-bound cargo, and Long Island-bound cargo. That means a Brooklyn Bill of Lading, a piece of paper that allows the shipper to direct it to Brooklyn as opposed to anywhere in the PANYNJ system (which currently means the far side of Staten Island or in New Jersey), 100 years overdue. We should distribute this cargo outward to regional destinations by water, as ports in Europe, Asia and the USA are increasingly doing.

Sustainable planning would rethink waterfront park design. Parks should incorporate freight design, not just landscape design. Also the new waterfront retail should not do business as if it were inland. Here are some ideas:

Green Parks with Greenmarkets – Right now our most perishable food—fresh produce and fish—is handled at Hunts Point in a remote corner of the city. Our new waterfront parks could feature small intermodal terminals where Hunts Point freight ferries could dock, allowing delivery trucks to bypass the BQE and Manhattan avenues. Greenmarkets around these terminals would serve the local community, beautify the terminal and provide revenue needed to sustain the parks—all of which are designed with public-private financing models.

Move Express Freight by Water – Today Fed Ex shipments arrive near the water at Newark Airport. Their depots in Manhattan (next to Hudson River Park), Brooklyn and Staten Island are all within 100 yards of the water's edge. Why not bring Fed Ex packages in and out of the airport by water? New York would enjoy less traffic and air pollution while Fed Ex would enjoy more dependable travel times. Make the airport freight boat double as an airport passenger ferry.

Start the Brooklyn Big Box Boat - Many Brooklyn shipyards became big box stores: stores that could receive freight by water. From Red Hook to Jamaica Bay we have the world's largest Ikea coming to Red Hook; Home Depot, Jethro, and Costco in Sunset Park, Toys R Us in Gravesend Bay; Home Depot in the Coney Island Creek; and the Gateway Mall off Jamaica Bay. All are serviced by the congested BQE/Belt Parkway. If the freight ferry carried passengers, car traffic would decrease. The freight service would subsidize the passenger service, making this ever-volatile business more sustainable. Again, make the boat double as a JFK airport link?



Readiness - Last of all, the issue of our times: sustainability in the face of a terrorist event or disaster. We need to ensure that we can receive food and overseas shipments in the central city if something happens to the Kill Van Kull, or a bridge or tunnels used by tractor trailer trucks. And we may need to evacuate out of the city. That's a working waterfront, and waterfront parks piers with cleats or bollards (things to tie boats to). The new waterfront parks don't have them. As you consider plans for our waterfront, think of the dark times.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolina Salguero". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolina Salguero
Director
PortSide New York