

Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront

Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
Manhattan, New York

The Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront is writing to express our profound appreciation for your decision to commit \$284 million in City capital funds to repair and restore the East River Esplanade from 94th to 125th Street. Considering the deteriorating condition of this section of the Esplanade, we urge you to include these funds in your FY 21-22 capital budget and do everything in your power to move this project forward in the most expeditious possible manner. We stand ready to support its approval this spring by the City Council together with a speedy design, procurement process, and construction.

This East Harlem section is the final major segment of your grand vision for the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, a celebrated initiative to create a continuous loop around the entire perimeter of Manhattan. Until now, it has not been the beneficiary of a substantial capital investment to restore and improve it. The west side of this Greenway with Hudson River Park as its centerpiece is in good shape. The City has started work on six critical projects on the East Side: 1) East River Pinch Point project at East 13-15th Streets, 2) United Nations Esplanade from 41st to 53rd Streets, 3) waterfront park from East 53rd to East 61st Street, 4) Harlem River Greenway from East 125th to 134th Streets, 5) Harlem River Speedway project from 145th to 165th Streets and 6) Inwood section that encompasses Sherman Creek to Inwood Hill Park. Your \$284 million dollar investment addresses the current gap, and is also a vital component of Regional Plan Association's Five Borough Bikeway proposal.

A City press release proudly proclaimed two years ago that the completion of these projects would "connect five miles of continuous waterfront greenway from East 53rd to 145th Streets". However, the progressively deteriorating condition of the East Harlem Esplanade from 94th to 125th Street belies this noble vision with its sinkholes, two sets of fences blocking access through 114th and 117th Streets, and over 1300 feet of crumbling seawall. In addition, the neglected state of the East Harlem Esplanade is epitomized by the condition of the Pier at 107th Street that is now condemned. The attached photographs make this assessment graphically compelling. Groups like East River CREW once provided free rowing instruction and access to the water at East 96th street and that is no longer available. This problem is compounded by the exceptionally low portion of land set aside as parkland on the Manhattan side of the East River in the highly diverse and growing East Harlem community. They deserve easily accessible outstanding waterfront and recreational activities.

In light of our strong interest in and support for restoration of this final section of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, we request the City keep us apprised of your timeline for formal approval of this capital budget item. It is imperative that the City advance this project all the way to completion in the most expedient manner feasible as a matter of elemental social justice and public safety. Given the experience of the NYCEDC in overseeing the other East Side projects that include significant resiliency measures, we would like to assume that NYCEDC will play a cooperating role with City Parks in view of the extensive coastal resiliency measures being put into place around our waterways.

For these reasons, the Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront strongly applauds your decision to invest \$284 million in the East Harlem Esplanade. We look forward to a spectacular new open green space along the East Harlem Waterfront and completion of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway.

Sincerely,

Please see signature pages that follow



Alliance for Kips Bay

Molly Hollister
Molly Hollister, President



Bike New York

Kenneth J. Podiziba
Kenneth J. Podiziba, President and CEO



Billion Oyster Project

Katie Mosher
Katie Mosher, Director of Programs



Community Board 8

R. Squire
Russel Squire, Chair CB 8
Tricia Shimamura, Barry Schneider
Co-chairs of Parks & Waterfront



Community Board 11

Nilsa Orama
Nilsa Orama, Chair of CB11



Concrete Safaris

Mac Levine, Executive Director

Jessica Elliott

Jessica Elliott, Chair of Environment, CB11



Harlem One Stop



CIVITAS

Jim Tripp
Jim Tripp, Board VP
William Bateson
Bill Bateson, AIA Board Member



East River Crew

V. Gilbert
Victoria Gilbert, President
vgilbert@saintdavids.org



El Barrio Fishing Club

Roger Hernandez
Roger Hernandez, Jr,
President



Friends of the East River Esplanade

Jennifer Ratner
Jennifer Ratner, Board President
Stacy Papas
Stacy Papas, Executive Director



Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District

Rachel Levy
Rachel Levy, Executive Director,
rlevy@friends-ues.org



Lower East Side Ecology Center

Christine Datz-Romero
Christine Datz-Romero,
Executive Director



The NY Harbor School

Jeffrey Chetirko
Jeffrey Chetirko, Principal

Mauricio Gonzalez
Mauricio Gonzalez, Biologist



New Yorkers For Parks

Adam Ganser
Adam Ganser, Executive Director



New York League of Conservation Voters

Julie Tighe
Julie Tighe, President



**Robert J. Rodriguez
NYS Assembly**

Robert J. Rodriguez
Robert J. Rodriguez



**Rebecca A. Seawright
NYS Assembly**

Rebecca A. Seawright
Rebecca A. Seawright



Regional Plan Association

Tom Wright
Tom Wright, President



Shorewalkers NYC

Pamela Cress
Pamela Cress, President
Mail@shorewalkers.org



Transportation Alternatives

Danny Harris
Danny Harris, Executive Director



Tri-state Transportation Campaign

Janna Chernetz
Janna Chernetz, Deputy Director
janna@tstc.org



Uptown Grand Central

Carey King
Carey King, Director



The Waterfront Alliance



WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Peggy Shepard
Peggy Shepard, Co-founder and Executive Director

Please send any responses to EastHarlemWaterfront@gmail.com

cc.

Diana Ayala, *Member of the City Council*

Justin Brannan, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts*

Gale Brewer, *Manhattan Borough President*

Daniel Dromm, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Finance*

Adriano Espaillat, *US Congressman*

Henry Gutman, *Commissioner of the City Department of Transportation*

Ben Kallos, *Member of the City Council*

Peter Koo, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation*

Rachel Loeb, *Acting President of NYC Economic Development Corporation*

Carolyn Maloney, *US Congresswoman*

Mitchell J. Silver, *Commissioner of the City Department of Parks and Recreation*

Scott M. Stringer, *City Comptroller*

Jumaane D. Williams, *NYC Public Advocate*

And to key members of pertinent City Council Committees.