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520 Miles of Waterfront to Get Long-Range Plan

By [PATRICK MCGEEHAN](#)

Less than five years ago, preservationists criticized the [Bloomberg administration](#) for [allowing Ikea](#) to pave over a dock for repairing ships in Red Hook, Brooklyn. They said city officials had forsaken New York's working waterfront by catering to developers of hangar-size stores and luxury condominiums.

But now some of those same critics are praising Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and other city leaders for assembling a long-term plan that gives some leeway to the maritime industry while trying to lure New Yorkers to the water's edge — and, in many places, onto the water itself, in kayaks and boats.

On Monday, the mayor and Christine C. Quinn, the City Council speaker, are to release to the public the first comprehensive, 10-year plan for the development of the city's 520 miles of shoreline.

The plan, which was required by a bill Ms. Quinn sponsored and the Council passed in 2008, makes clear that cleaning up and redeveloping the waterfront is a priority of Mr. Bloomberg's that he hopes will be a part of his legacy.

The plan does not call for significant new city or state spending, Ms. Quinn said in an interview. Instead, it is an effort to consolidate all of the projects already proposed or under way to make the rivers, bays and shoreline more integral to daily life and commerce in the city.

"This plan gives us the opportunity to look and see where we have really capitalized on this asset and where we haven't," Ms. Quinn said. "If we hadn't done this plan, we wouldn't as clearly know that 13,000 jobs are supported by the maritime industry."

Robert K. Steel, the deputy mayor for economic development, said that all the "waterfront projects together are a priority." That means that plans for dozens of parks and piers along the rivers would no longer be considered individually but as a whole, which could protect them in times of cost-cutting, Mr. Steel said.

The same goes for what is left of industry along the water. The report notes that, along with employing some 13,000 people, waterfront businesses, using tugboats and barges to move goods and materials around the harbor, reduce truck traffic in the city. Mr. Steel said there was enough space for all the competing users, like private builders, longshoremen and canoeing enthusiasts.

Along with the 10-year plan, Mr. Bloomberg is releasing an "action agenda" of projects scheduled to start in the three years left of his third term in office. Those plans, which include [finishing](#) the Brooklyn Bridge Park and the [East River Esplanade](#), will cost more than \$700 million, all of which has already been allocated, a spokesman for the mayor said. Separately, about \$1.6 billion in improvements to the city's wastewater treatment plants should help reduce pollution in the waterways, the report says.

Roland Lewis, chief executive of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, which represents groups with commercial and recreational interests along the waterfront, said, "The city has come a long way from when we were paving over that graving dock in Red Hook where Ikea was built."

Mr. Lewis, whose organization sued to save the dock beneath Ikea, likened its loss to the role that the destruction of the original Pennsylvania Station played in the city's preservation movement. "It was sort of a wake-up moment," Mr. Lewis said, adding that the dock still existed under the Ikea parking lot and could be uncovered and used again someday.

Mr. Lewis said the recession that slammed the brakes on a lot of building plans also helped the alliance's cause. "The economy," he said, put the brakes "on some of the waterfront development that was going forward at breakneck speed."

"There was a little bit of kismet," he added, "that the call for a re-evaluation of the waterfront happened at this moment."

What was crucial, Mr. Lewis said, was for all of the city, state and federal agencies that have some say over what happens in, on and around the city's waterways to work more cooperatively. If that can be done, he said, then Mr. Bloomberg "could rightfully be called the waterfront mayor."

Still, Mr. Lewis added: "We want to see him do more, faster and better. But when we look back in 20 years, I think we'll say this is one of the great legacies of his administration."