



Mayor Bloomberg, Speaker Silver and Officials Open First Section of Lower Manhattan's New East River Waterfront Esplanade

Press Release

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Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and other officials today opened the first section of the new East River Waterfront Esplanade just south of the South Street Seaport in Lower Manhattan. The first phase – from Wall Street to Maiden Lane – is part of a larger \$165 million project that is revitalizing a once neglected two-mile stretch of City-owned land along the water's edge from the tip of Lower Manhattan to East River Park north of the Manhattan Bridge. The vibrant esplanade will transform the Lower Manhattan and Lower East Side waterfronts into a pedestrian-friendly new public open space destination with sweeping views across the East River and New York Harbor. Upon completion of the larger project in 2013, the two-mile esplanade will provide a contiguous pedestrian walkway and a bicycle pathway along the East River from Battery Park to East River Park. Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Silver were joined for the announcement on the esplanade at Wall Street by Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel, State Senator Daniel L. Squadron, Council Member Margaret Chin, City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden, New York City Economic Development Corporation President Seth W. Pinsky, Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, Community Board 1 Chair Julie Menin, Alliance for Downtown New York President Elizabeth H. Berger, David Emil representing the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Harbor District Director Paul Berry, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance President and CEO Roland Lewis, Gregg Pasquarelli of SHoP Architects and Ken Smith of Ken Smith Landscape Architect.

“The new [East River Waterfront Esplanade](#) is the newest jewel on New York City's magnificent Harbor,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “One of the goals of the waterfront plan we unveiled earlier this year is to reconnect New Yorkers to New York City's more than 500 miles of waterfront and make it part

of their everyday lives, and the new esplanade will help do that for Lower Manhattan's tens of thousands of residents, 300,000 plus workers and millions of visitors. When complete in full, the two-mile esplanade will extend the green space around Manhattan's waterfront that includes Riverside Park, Hudson River Park on the West Side, Battery Park at Lower Manhattan's tip, and East River Park on the East Side."

"For too long, my neighbors on the east side of Lower Manhattan have not been able to enjoy the kind of open space and access to the waterfront that they deserve," said Speaker Silver. "That is why I have worked so hard, along with Mayor Bloomberg, to open up our East River waterfront and expand recreational opportunities for my neighbors on the Lower East Side, Chinatown and the Financial District. We must return the river to the people of this city, to whom it belongs."

"I'm thrilled to see the first phase of this project come to completion," said Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "The City's waterfront is one of our greatest resources, providing recreation, transportation, and open space. When we introduced our comprehensive plan to revitalize this stretch of land, we also vowed to never turn our backs on the waterfront. Today, it's clear that we have not – we're only looking forward."

The new esplanade – open to the public from 6:00 AM to midnight – provides a place for residents, office workers and visitors to Lower Manhattan to enjoy the waterfront. Along the new esplanade are plantings and trees comprised of native coastal species, as well as seating elements evocative of the area's maritime past. Elevated bar stool seating offers visitors an opportunity to sit next to the railing and look out over the water toward Brooklyn. The railing at the bar also doubles as a tabletop on which users can eat, use a laptop or read. The esplanade also features chaise lounges, game tables, planter walls and waterside benches. The "Look-Out," a series of stadium-like steps leading to the water at the foot of Wall Street, enables visitors to sit and observe the water with unobstructed views. A new state-of-the-art dog park features a climbing bridge, sand pit, splash pad and dog house. The entire esplanade is unified by a newly installed purple girder underneath the FDR Drive that will be illuminated at night and visible over the esplanade and across the river.

The esplanade stretches to Pier 11 at Wall Street, one of the stops on the City's new East River Ferry Service launched by Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn in June 2011. The new service will provide year-round ferry transportation between East 34th Street and Pier 11 in Manhattan, Long Island City in Queens, Greenpoint, North Williamsburg, South Williamsburg, and DUMBO in Brooklyn.

"Parks and public spaces can have a transformative economic impact on neighborhoods, and we are constantly working to build or enhance them throughout New York City and particular on our waterfront," said Deputy Mayor Steel. "By making communities even more inviting places to live and work and by attracting tourists from around the world and New Yorkers from all five boroughs, these spaces do a lot to drive economic activity and create jobs."

“Innovative parks and public open spaces have the ability to revitalize whole neighborhoods,” said City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden, who spearheaded the design efforts for the esplanade. “This new waterfront esplanade will completely transform Lower Manhattan and reconnect its many residents, Financial District workers and visitors to the East River waterfront. Getting more New Yorkers to the water is an important goal in City Planning’s comprehensive waterfront plan, Vision 2020, and East River Waterfront Esplanade fulfills multiple goals of the plan, including expanding access to and enlivening the waterfront. This fabulous new waterfront esplanade will also animate the once dark space under the FDR Drive and give the Lower Manhattan community a unique, exciting new open space to enjoy in as many ways as there are people to enjoy it.”

“This project is the perfect example of how a coordinated inter-agency plan, developed in conjunction with elected officials and community members, can transform neighborhoods, connecting them with our natural resources,” said NYCEDC President Pinsky. “Today’s opening will complement a number of other projects already underway, including the recently-launched East River Ferry, allowing residents and visitors to further explore the waterfront, while simultaneously generating jobs for the people of Lower Manhattan and the City as a whole.”

“One of the hallmarks of this administration has been the citywide effort to provide New Yorkers with increased access to the waterfront for active recreation and passive enjoyment,” said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Benepe. “With today’s opening of the first section of the East River Waterfront Esplanade, residents and visitors alike will enjoy a new open space with sweeping views across the East River and New York Harbor.”

“This esplanade is a great addition to the City’s waterfront,” said DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. “New Yorkers can now travel from the Brooklyn Bridge and other East River crossings all the way to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal, along a safe, scenic route that makes the river a destination.”

Conceived in 2002 as part of Mayor Bloomberg’s Vision for Lower Manhattan, the plan for the East River Waterfront Esplanade was developed in close consultation with the Department of City Planning, NYCEDC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Transportation, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, local elected officials, and representatives of Community Boards 1 and 3 in Lower Manhattan and the Lower East Side. It incorporates elements of waterfront concept plans developed by Community Boards 1 and 3, and the Alliance for Downtown New York. The esplanade design, overseen by NYCEDC, the Department of City Planning and the Mayor’s Office, was created by SHoP Architects PC with Ken Smith Landscape Architect and Tillotson Design Associates. Jacobs Engineering is the construction manager, and design engineering is by a joint venture of HDR/Arup. The project is being built by NYCEDC and funded with the largest off-site project allocation by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which includes \$155 million

funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as \$9.7 million from Federal and New York State Transportation Funds.

The conceptual plan for the East River Waterfront Esplanade has been honored for its innovation and excellence. In 2006, the Department of City Planning and SHoP Architects received the Waterfront Center's "Excellence on the Waterfront Award" which acknowledges high quality waterfront plans and projects from all over the world. For its work on the project, SHoP Architects received the 55th Annual Progressive Architecture Award, which recognizes risk-taking practitioners and promotes progress in the field of architecture.

"New York City's waterfront is its hidden jewel, and with today's opening of the East River Waterfront Esplanade, we are one giant step closer to completing a ribbon park around all of Lower Manhattan," said Senator Charles E. Schumer. "We have already seen the tremendous benefits that have come with the transformation of the piers along the Hudson River. Now residents and visitors will be able to have the same experience along the East River as well. It will be a boon to the downtown economy, and bring us that much closer to connecting all New Yorkers with this too often overlooked urban treasure while unleashing the full potential of New York's post-industrial waterfront."

"Today's opening of the first section of the East River Waterfront Esplanade is yet another welcome step in the exciting revitalization of Lower Manhattan," said Congress Member Jerrold Nadler. "I am thrilled to see the Esplanade become a reality, beginning to connect Lower Manhattan's Battery and East River Parks, uniting Downtown and creating an open recreation space in its own right for the community. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this a reality."

"Downtown Manhattan is a destination for our city's new residents, visitors and enterprising small businesses, but its waterfront has long been a missing link in the City's greenway. The opening of this revitalized waterfront esplanade transforms a neglected site into a place of beauty for all New Yorkers to enjoy," said Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. "I commend the Mayor, Speaker Silver and the coalition of elected officials that contributed to this innovative project, the result of which is a successful blend of community priorities and a beautiful beginning to the East River's revitalization."

"The opening of this first section of the East River Esplanade is yet another sign that the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan is real," said Senator Squadron. "This is another step in linking New York's waterfront open spaces, from uptown and the westside to Brooklyn and Governor's Island, and creating a Harbor Park – a central park for the center of our city. The East River Waterfront Esplanade will be a dramatic part of that vision for residents and visitors alike."

"The East River Waterfront Esplanade will be an invaluable and much-loved resource for the lower Manhattan community," said Council Member Chin. "The East River waterfront is a unique part of

the fabric of downtown Manhattan, and now we get to realize its full potential. I know this park will bring our community closer together and make us proud.”

“The east side of Lower Manhattan in Community Board 1 is the fastest growing neighborhood in all five boroughs and with the opening of the East River Waterfront Esplanade a long held dream of our community will come to fruition, that will enable not only residents of downtown but all New Yorkers, workers and tourists to walk, bike and truly enjoy access to the waterfront,” said Community Board 1 Chair Julie Menin.

“Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg, City Planning Commissioner Burden and EDC President Pinsky for making a fantastic new park along the East River,” said Elizabeth H. Berger, President of the Downtown Alliance. “With SHoP Architects’ extraordinary design, here’s a public place where the 306,000 people who work in Lower Manhattan and our 56,000 residents can literally get their feet wet!”

“The New East River Waterfront Esplanade is one more beautiful link in the chain of parks and points of access that will open up our harbor and waterways to New Yorkers in all five boroughs as envisioned in the City’s comprehensive waterfront plan,” said Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance President and CEO Roland Lewis. “And at this link you can actually touch the water. How about that!”

Future sections currently under construction include additional portions of the esplanade from the Battery Maritime Building to Wall Street, a restaurant pavilion at Maiden Lane, a redeveloped Pier 15, and a restroom pavilion at John Street. Pier 15, a 500-foot-long pier evocative of historical two-level piers, is expected to open in Fall 2011, featuring lawns for picnicking and sunbathing on the upper level, where users can enjoy the East River from an elevated perspective. The lower level will have an active dock, a maritime educational pavilion and a café, as well as an abundance of seating opportunities and plantings. In addition to the five pavilions that are currently planned along the esplanade and on Pier 15, it is anticipated that the open space under the FDR will allow for temporary programs and events such as farmers’ markets, performances, exhibitions and community gatherings.

A restaurant operator is being selected through a competitive Request for Proposal process for a new pavilion under the FDR Drive at Maiden Lane. It is scheduled to open by Summer 2012 and will increase activity with its waterfront dining. Revenue from the pavilion lease will contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the new esplanade.

Surrounding the pier will be docking facilities for commercial and excursion boats to tie up. NYCEDC issued a Request for Proposals last month for the lease and operation of the Pier 15 Maritime Pavilion and its ship berthing spaces, with responses due back in August. The proceeds of the Pier 15 maritime lease will be dedicated to the maintenance and operation of the entire East River Waterfront Esplanade.

Planning, design, and marine work are also well underway for esplanade improvements and Pier 35 in Community Board 3 to the north, which is expected to open to the public by 2013. Based on consultation with the community, this section will include amenities such as courts for basketball and Petanque (a French game similar to bocce), low-impact exercise machines, seating, and another “Look-Out” between Rutgers Slip and Pike-Allen.

The esplanade is one of several projects to promote connectivity in Lower Manhattan. The Parks Department is leading the effort to implement waterfront access projects including improvements at Peck Slip, Rutgers Slip, Catherine Slip, and Montgomery Slip. City Planning and NYCEDC are coordinating the design teams to ensure that the East River Waterfront Esplanade not only provides continuous waterfront access and new recreational amenities, but is also integrated with adjacent neighborhoods, linking the Financial District, the Civic Center, Chinatown, and the Lower East Side to the East River. The esplanade is also a component of NYHarborWay, an initiative of the Bloomberg Administration that features New York Harbor as a major recreational destination for New Yorkers and visitors. Spearheaded by NYC & Company, the initiative will connect eight major waterfront points of interest by ferry or bike greenways.

This [East River Waterfront Esplanade](#) is part of the [Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy](#), a sustainable blueprint for New York City’s waterfront and waterways launched by Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn in May 2011. To reconnect New Yorkers and visitors to the water and reclaim New York City’s standing as a premier waterfront city, the plan will transform the City’s waterfront with new parks, new industrial activities and new housing, and it will capitalize on the City’s waterways to promote water-borne transportation, recreation, maritime activity and natural habitats. The plan has two components: a three-year action agenda comprised of 130 funded projects, including the development of more than 50 acres of new waterfront parks, creation of 14 new waterfront esplanades and introduction of new commuter ferry service; and the Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, a framework for the City’s 520 miles of shoreline for the next decade and beyond. The 130 action agenda projects are expected to create 13,000 construction jobs and at least 3,400 permanent maritime and industrial jobs. It is the first citywide plan for the waterfront in nearly two decades and the first ever comprehensive plan for the waterways themselves.