Dedication

To James S. Drago of Union City in recognition of his half-century of devoted service on behalf of Palisades protection and sound waterfront planning.

Photo Credits

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Credits and Acknowledgements

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RIVER CITY

SUMMARY

THE WATERFRONT CHOICE: RIVER CITY OR DISORDER

The New Jersey side of the Hudson River could become one of the world’s greatest waterfronts. The setting is magnificent, the location is unparalleled, and it is one of the very few parts of any major metropolitan area that remains unpopulated and virtually free of buildings. Currently, there is considerable interest in redeveloping the area, and a number of major proposals have already been advanced for new apartments, shopping centers and office buildings. If the waterfront is planned and developed as a single length-of-the-river entity—a distinct and recognizable “River City”—it could become a lively, pedestrian-oriented waterfront that attracts fishermen, boaters, cyclists, children and the elderly (as well as office workers and tourists) to beautiful places at the water’s edge.

If the redevelopment is fragmented and haphazard, on the other hand, the waterfront will consist of isolated clusters that have little to do with each other or the 11 Palisades and waterfront municipalities from Fort Lee to Bayonne to which they belong. Worse, if development plans continue to proceed without a coordinated transportation and parking policy, the waterfront will soon be clogged with traffic and dominated by parking structures—in other words, a waterfront neither agreeable nor profitable.

If this vision of a new and vital “River City” is to be achieved, coordinated planning should center on three elements that parallel the River: a transitway, a walkway and the Palisades.

Transitway. The waterfront cannot accommodate even a fraction of the proposed development if typical auto-dependent suburban development patterns are followed; the whole area would have to be paved over for roads and parking. Ordinarily, transportation and land use planning should proceed in tandem, but several waterfront proposals have already progressed to the point where, if they are to proceed, a transportation plan must be implemented now—in advance of a more comprehensive plan. Developers must know where roads and transit facilities will be before they can decide where to put buildings, parks and a walkway.
A basic transportation plan for the waterfront should:

- minimize waterfront auto use while improving roads to serve essential traffic;
- restrict parking on the waterfront and connect off-site parking facilities to the waterfront with good public transit;
- outline a transit right-of-way up and down the length of the waterfront, with connections to PATH facilities and access to the west side of the Palisades through existing rail freight tunnels;
- provide for a sleek, quiet and non-polluting light rail system of trolleys or buses to serve the intensely-developed waterfront area.

Walkway. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires a continuous public access walkway along the River. This is a major achievement that should foster a cohesive riverfront community, but it must be well-used by pedestrians if it is to succeed. Therefore the walkway should:

- serve as the prime pedestrian link to the new shops, offices and apartments planned for the waterfront;
- connect to public transit facilities and parks;
- offer the best possible views of the River.

The Palisades. The cliffs form the natural backdrop for the new waterfront, but they are virtually unprotected south of Fort Lee. Gouged and overwhelmed by billboards and high-rises, they have become a no-man’s-land and a dumping ground. Protecting and maintaining this precious natural landscape should be part of any waterfront development program. Some entity—perhaps the Palisades Interstate Park Commission—should have responsibility for:

- protecting the cliff and prohibiting building closer than 50 feet from the cliff face;
- clearing the area of refuse, billboards and graffiti;
- designing walkways, stairways and trails linking the cliff tops to the waterfront;
- acquiring key parcels for parkland.

OTHER WATERFRONT PLANS

Liberty State Park. The Park’s 750 acres in Jersey City are the greatest recreational opportunity on the waterfront. Because of the ferry service to Liberty and Ellis Islands, it is the most popular State Park in New Jersey. It is still largely undeveloped, however, and future planning should provide:

- walkways and sidewalks throughout the park;
- public transit connections to PATH facilities at Pavonia and Exchange Place and to the adjacent municipalities;
- better swimming facilities and other recreational installations to meet the needs of the surrounding communities.

Mixed-Use Developments. Recent plans for major private redevelopment projects on the waterfront indicate the potential for attractive homes, offices and shops. As these plans are refined, they should:

- connect new streets with the existing grid, where possible, so that new developments will harmonize with the older parts of town;
- ensure that parking garages do not wall off the old waterfront neighborhoods from the new and from the Hudson;
- reserve solid piers for recreational pedestrians and fishermen, rather than auto-dependent developments.

Sewage Treatment. The pollution of the Hudson River is exacerbated by inadequate treatment on both the New York and New Jersey sides. The federal government has imposed a deadline of July 1988 for proper secondary treatment of sewage, and the development of the waterfront will hinge upon the abilities of the Hudson County municipalities to meet federal sewage treatment standards. Unfortunately, progress so far has been slow. A comprehensive area-wide approach to sewage treatment is imperative if a new “River City” is to be developed on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River.

ESTABLISHING A WATERFRONT COMMISSION

In 1980, a State study commission strongly recommended that the waterfront be developed under the auspices of a State waterfront planning commission. That recommendation still makes sense. The new commission should include mayoral and civic representatives of the 11 waterfront municipalities, as well as State appointees. It should be authorized to:

- draft a master plan for the Hudson waterfront and the Palisades, providing at least one waterfront park in each municipality;
- establish design standards to protect both the views from the cliffs and the views of the cliffs from across the River;
- set standards to improve the general appearance of the waterfront corridor, including the removal of overhead wires, billboards and obstructions;
- require municipal corridor, including the removal of overhead wires, billboards and obstructions;
- require municipal corridor, including the removal of overhead wires, billboards and obstructions;
- create a tax-sharing plan among the Palisades and waterfront municipalities;
- administer a special tax assessment district to generate revenues to acquire waterfront parkland and make public improvements.
INTRODUCTION

In late 1966, Regional Plan Association released its Lower Hudson study, one of the first to point out that the decline of waterfront shipping and manufacturing would present an opportunity—for the first and only time in this century—to bring people back to the banks of the Hudson to live, work and play. Nowhere was that opportunity more evident or inviting than on the New Jersey side of the River from Edgewater to Bayonne. Here, the waterfront was almost completely given over to shipping, manufacturing and miles of rail freight yards. Much of Hudson County, with urban areas as crowded as Brooklyn and the Bronx, was cut off from access to its waterfront. At the time of the study, eight railroads controlled more than a thousand riverfront acres. Regional Plan predicted that with consolidation of the freight yards, the riverfront could be developed with houses, offices, parks and magnificent recreational facilities.

But the building boom was delayed. The collapse of the rail companies, followed by lengthy bankruptcy proceedings and rail reorganization, made it difficult for developers to acquire waterfront property, and the demand for housing and offices was sluggish during the 1970s. Where property was available, the proposals for its use, including tank farms and certain kinds of manufacturing, were opposed by citizen groups which were seeking a more accessible and attractive riverfront.

Now, however, after almost two decades, the development which Regional Plan envisioned is likely to be realized. Within the last few years, some of the Region’s most effective developers have acquired substantial riverfront tracts in Jersey City, Hoboken, Weehawken, West New York and Edgewater. They have come forward with proposals for restaurants, marinas, luxury housing, Manhattan ferry service and offices, which are far more interesting and inviting than anything previously proposed.

There has been other waterfront progress. The Lower Hudson study called for a continuous waterfront walkway from the George Washington Bridge to Bayonne. State officials took up the idea, a feasibility study was commissioned, and now the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires that all new riverfront development include a public walkway. It may be years before the many different walkway segments are joined, but the right of the public to have access to its riverfront via the walkway, even while traversing private property, is substantially established.

Regional Plan also recommended the restoration of Hoboken’s elegant brownstones and other substantial housing. No State intervention was necessary here. The private brownstone restoration movement proved so successful that it spurred the revival of other old neighborhoods, most notably in Jersey City. State government joined in the historic preservation movement, restoring two buildings that Regional Plan regarded as important architectural gems, the Erie Lackawanna Rail and Ferry Terminal in Hoboken and the Jersey Central Terminal in Liberty State Park. The State undertook a cleanup of the Jersey Central freight yards, and with the institution of ferry service to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the new and only partially developed Liberty State Park became the most visited park in the State system.

FRAGMENTED DEVELOPMENT

There is also reason for concern, however. In the Lower Hudson study, Regional Plan joined local civic organizations in arguing for the preservation of the Palisades south of the George Washington Bridge. Views of the River and Manhattan skyline from the Palisades and views of the Palisades themselves from across the River are unique and splendid. Yet, these considerations were dismissed and much of the view from Washington Park in Union City was lost when the massive Doric high-rise was completed in 1970. Six years later, the little clifftop town of Guttenberg, in an effort to expand its tax base, allowed construction of the Galaxy high-rise apartments, which cut a substantial piece out of the Palisade face and obscured the town’s waterfront view.
It was to avert such problems and to ensure coherent waterfront redevelopment of the 11 municipalities along the River that in 1966 Regional Plan proposed that the State join the municipalities in developing a riverfront plan. Additionally, it was proposed that this group might join New York State and City and federal officials in “planning both sides of the lower Hudson, relating to the rest of the River and to pollution control priorities on the whole.” This latter proposal was given little consideration on the New Jersey side, doubtless being dismissed as “impractical.” On the New York side a development commission was formed, and for some years it oversaw development along the New York banks of the Hudson.

What is now clear, however, is how difficult it is to develop either the New York or New Jersey sides of the Hudson without such a cooperative effort. In recent months, New York and New Jersey publicly accused each other of bad faith in dumping raw sewage into the Hudson; New York City contested federal Urban Development Action Grants for the Jersey City riverfront; and the New Jersey congressional delegation has sought to undermine support for a New York City waterfront highway, Westway. Instead of quietly working out all their differences to lobby effectively for federal assistance, New Jersey and New York have worked against each other in Washington while representatives from other regions cheerfully sought a larger slice of a diminishing federal pie at our expense.

Regional Plan’s proposal for a permanent joint State/local Hudson riverfront planning group in New Jersey was endorsed by then Governor Brendan T. Byrne’s waterfront study commission. Legislation to establish such a body, introduced by Assemblyman (now State Senator) Christopher J. Jackman, languished in committee. In the absence of legislative initiative, Governor Thomas H. Kean established a ten-member waterfront committee under the Governor’s Office of Policy and Planning in late 1984. This group has done yeoman service in bringing the various State agencies that oversee riverfront development together with developers and local officials to review problems of mutual concern. It should be understood, however, that the group does not have the funds, staff or authority to draft the comprehensive riverfront plan which Regional Plan envisioned in 1966. Meanwhile, riverfront planning continues to be done by many different agencies:

- Eight Hudson River municipalities south of the George Washington Bridge have master plans that include part of the riverfront;
- Hudson and Bergen Counties have water and sewer plans which have direct ramifications for riverfront development;
- The DEP, as noted, has a walkway plan and is also charged with reviewing plans for new development within 500 feet of the River;
- New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJ DOT) and New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ Transit) have contracted with a consultant to assist in developing a riverfront transportation plan; meanwhile the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has been actively planning to improve Hudson crossings.

Most notably, several major developers have drafted or are in the process of drafting plans which call for 23 million square feet of office space, 1.9 million square feet of commercial space and 36,000 residential units.

What does not exist is any organization to put these plans together and see if they add up to an accessible and attractive riverfront. Indeed, sometimes they do not. If a fraction of the proposed development were built, for example, local parking requirements would dictate that an area the size of Hoboken be established on precious riverfront ground just for parking.

There is no organization that can effectively review the placement of buildings on the riverfront in relation to the walkway, the Palisades, public transit facilities or neighborhood developments. In this vacuum, the DEP is at this very moment obliged to decide whether permits should be issued for development.

The Hudson riverfront will attract substantial development, but failing to plan for it could actually prevent the area from getting as much as it is able to support. Here is an area which cries out for cooperative, comprehensive planning. The New Jersey riverfront is virtually an island, cut off by the Palisades to the west and the river to the east, with few connecting “bridges” and without a continuous north-south roadway. If this area is not carefully planned, initial development will inhibit rather than stimulate additional projects because of the lack of amenities and excessive traffic. The best developers appreciate the need for a comprehensive planning approach, knowing that it would simplify the permitting process and better define “the rules of the game.” At the same time, however, developers cannot be expected to wait indefinitely while the Governor’s waterfront committee or a similar group evolves into a commission with planning authority.

For the first and only time in this century, New Jersey has the opportunity to create a series of waterfront places as exciting as anything in Baltimore, Boston, San Francisco or New York with a view which none of them can match. For that to happen, a joint local/State planning commission should be established now.
RIVER CITY: A Comprehensive Design

The 18 miles of riverfront from Fort Lee to Bayonne is one of the few extensive areas in the center of any major metropolitan area which is virtually free of buildings, unpopulated and awaiting development. And this site, which is closer to downtown and midtown Manhattan than most of New York City itself, offers a spectacular view of the Hudson River and the Manhattan skyline, with the rock and foliage of the Palisades as a backdrop. This is a rare development opportunity, but if it is to fulfill its promise, the riverfront must be planned boldly and comprehensively with the following goals in mind:

— The riverfront should be an exciting place with diverse attractions, and it should be easily accessible to the public.

— The riverfront communities should complement one another and harmonize with the Hudson River, the Palisades and the existing communities of which they are a part.

To achieve these goals requires thinking of the waterfront not as a new suburb of Manhattan or a series of unrelated waterfront towns, but as a coherent, length-of-the-river entity—“River City.”

In such a city, the walkway proposed by the State would become an American Champs-Elysées—a boulevard leading pedestrians and cyclists to splendid waterfront plazas, marinas, shops, restaurants and hotels. Liberty State Park would become Central-Park-on-the-Hudson—the focus of “River City” recreation and culture. The proposed mixed-use developments, including Port Liberte, Harborside, Newport City, Port Authority Piers, Lincoln Harbor and Arcorp, would be stops on a transit line and thus become neighborhoods both of “River City” and their respective host municipalities. What is envisioned is an urban waterfront at its best, attracting fishermen and boaters, cyclists and joggers, neighborhood children and tourists, the elderly and office workers to beautiful public places at the water’s edge.

Two conditions are necessary to realize this vision: first, that the riverfront be intensively developed as a city; second, that the development be planned from a comprehensive, length-of-the-river perspective.

The first condition—intense development—is already planned. Developers’ proposals add up to a city of 50-60,000 residents, with 75,000 office workers. The attractions of this city will be diverse. The River, now quiet, will be filled with pleasure
craft if even a fraction of the proposed 6,700 boat slips are constructed. There will be new restaurants, at least one regional shopping center and hundreds of new hotel rooms.

Long-established residents of Jersey City, Hoboken, Weehawken and other waterfront municipalities may look upon the growth of a new waterfront city with some understandable trepidation, particularly as they contemplate the traffic chaos that could result. What must be understood, however, is that—if properly planned—high-density urban development offers a better chance of protecting open space and solving traffic problems than low-density suburban-style development. That is because only high-density development can sustain an effective public transit system—bus or preferably light rail. Such a system on the Hudson waterfront would allow a lot of space that would otherwise have to be used for parking to be set aside for public purposes such as parks and walkways. And public transit inevitably encourages walking, making possible a waterfront of parks, not parking lots, a waterfront for people, not automobiles.

It must be stressed, however, that if the proposed urban development is not planned comprehensively, the opportunity to create an accessible, lively public waterfront will not be realized. In fact, the development itself will not be realized, since it will be choked off rather early by traffic congestion that borders on grid-lock. We would then be left with riverfront development that offers the advantages of neither city nor suburb.

It will be pointed out that most of the important cities of the world were not planned in a comprehensive way. Can't we "muddle through" here, allowing each development to proceed until traffic congestion forces a transit solution? The fact is that no city really develops that way. Even those with apparently haphazard growth patterns develop around an existing or planned transportation system—first, usually, around a river or harbor, then around a rail or streetcar network; finally, around major highways. What is happening now on the waterfront is that complete site plans are being drafted without any firm knowledge of the extent of road, highway and public transit improvements. How can a site planner be expected to know where to put shops, hotels and houses or how much parking to provide if the location and capacity of roads and transit services have never been defined?

Without intruding on basic local home-rule prerogatives, the State of New Jersey ought to define as soon as possible the relationship of three basic riverfront planning elements:

- The walkway
- Public transit and road improvements
- Palisades preservation

Only when these elements are planned and accepted can the individual site plans begin to make sense.

This report discusses the walkway, transitway and Palisades elements and provides a brief analysis of several plans for large mixed-use developments and the Liberty State Park plan.
THE WALKWAY

The DEP has the authority to require that new developments within 500 feet of the Hudson include access to the river via a public walkway. The importance of this walkway to Hudson riverfront planning and design must be underscored. Without DEP’s initiative—undertaken with a skeletal staff and limited funds—the public might simply have been cut off from the riverfront. That has actually happened in many places where there is strong pressure to build an exclusive and private “gold coast.” The Admiral’s Walk apartments in Edgewater, for example, which were built prior to promulgation of DEP’s walkway rules, do have an agreeable waterfront walkway— but for residents only. The building of such exclusive walkways should not happen again; in fact, as a result of State walkway initiative, Admiral’s Walk management has agreed to open its walkway to the public, when portions of the public walkway at either end are completed.

The walkway is particularly important because it is the only length-of-the-riverfront design element (in the absence of plans for Palisades protection or riverfront transit) supported by force of law. As such, it will foster a cohesive riverfront community instead of a series of isolated developments having little to do with each other or with neighboring communities. And because the riverfront walkway is reserved for pedestrians (DEP will also attempt to establish a parallel bikeway), it should help encourage a humanly-scaled waterfront development.

To carry out its walkway plans, the DEP hired a consultant to help set walkway guidelines and suggest a route. According to these guidelines, the walkway right-of-way should be at least 30 feet wide, of which 16 feet should be reserved for the walkway proper. The rest would be landscaped or used for a bicycle lane. The guidelines stress that the walkway should be as close to the water’s edge as possible, parallel to the River, continuous, and afford a view of the water and Palisades. It should also be built of durable materials, be non-threatening to the safety and security of the places it traverses, compatible with the design of surrounding areas and respectful of environmentally sensitive areas. These guidelines are a useful starting point for both DEP and the developers. But what the walkway will actually look like, its route and dimensions, will depend ultimately on negotiations among DEP, private developers and local governments which own waterfront property. The task of putting together an 18-mile walkway running past
elegant high-rises, industrial sites, parks and wetlands will be formidable and may take a generation or more to accomplish, but it is well worth the effort.

In developing the walkway, DEP should not lose sight of one overriding goal: that the walkway be well used. That goal may be more difficult to realize than is commonly understood because the walkway, like much of the riverfront, will be quite remote from the large population centers which it should serve. The walkway guidelines call for connecting links with the first public road inland, but these distances may be too great to walk comfortably. It should be possible for nonwaterfront residents to get to the walkway without the assistance of an automobile. What is needed is a riverfront public transit system, so that trolley or bus riders can get on and off near the walkway. But there are as yet no defined riverfront and transit plans. This makes it exceedingly difficult to plan a walkway which will be useful not just to riverside residents but all people of Hudson and lower Bergen Counties.

How well the walkway works as a public place will also depend on its location with respect to buildings within any given development site. The walkway can be treated as a grand boulevard or tucked away as a mere concession to the law. The plans for Lincoln Harbor in Weehawken and Port Authority Piers—in Hoboken suggest a prominent landscaped promenade; on the other hand, in the Newport City and Port Liberte plans, it is difficult to find where the walkway will go at all. The walkway ought to be a central thoroughfare unless there is a compelling reason for it to be otherwise. Indeed, it can be the kind of amenity that adds prestige and value to adjacent properties. But, if the walkway is approached defensively as a potential threat to safety and security, then it may become just that—a lonely, isolated place that engenders feelings of insecurity.

Continuity is a particularly vexing problem. The DEP’s walkway plan calls for a “continuous” route, but it must be acknowledged that continuity can be achieved at present only if a significant part of the designated walkway route is far from the water’s edge. That is certainly the case in most of Bayonne, in Jersey City around Caven Point, in the Morris Canal area and in Hoboken north of Castle Point. Much as we favor a continuous walkway, DEP’s primary goal should be to secure the best riverfront sites for public access even at the expense of continuity. After all, there is no statutory requirement for continuity, but there is for public access to the riverfront. Better a somewhat fragmented promenade near the water than a continuous one which is remote.
WATERFRONT TRANSPORTATION

Traffic is the chief obstacle to developing the riverfront. If everything is built as planned, roadways in the entire vicinity will be impassable at rush hour, and a great deal of valuable waterfront property will have to be used for parking.

There are two ways to deal with this problem. The first is to scale back development drastically to reduce traffic; the second is to create a transportation system good enough to accommodate intense mixed-use development. We favor the second approach for several reasons. An intensely developed city across the river from Manhattan would bolster the entire regional economy. Waterfront municipalities would regain fiscal health. Owners of waterfront property could get a fair return on their valuable land, which is unlikely without intense development. Most importantly, the traffic problems are already so serious on arteries leading to the riverfront that major transportation improvements will be needed even for modest "scaled-back development." Why, then, not meet the transportation challenge head-on? What it will require is a transportation program based on State, local and private sector coordination of four essential elements: road and highway improvements, on-site parking restrictions, off-site parking opportunities and a new public transit system.

The riverfront transportation challenge is formidable. For transportation purposes, the riverfront is like a narrow island, about as long as Manhattan and cut off from "mainland" New Jersey by the Palisades. How many shops, dwelling units and offices will be built on this island? That depends on many things: the overall demand throughout the region for housing, offices, retailing and commercial recreation; interest rates; zoning changes; and transportation constraints. A recent study by the Real Estate Research Corporation for the NJ DOT estimated that waterfront development early in the next century would be:

- Offices—19,800,000 square feet
- Dwelling Units—29,200,000 square feet
- Retail—1,610,000 square feet*

By typical suburban standards, this level of development would generate about 70,000 rush-hour auto trips, necessitating an additional 35 freeway lanes—a physical impossibility on the riverfront. A conservative estimate of the amount of

* Real Estate Research Corporation, "Land Use in Waterfront Development Projects, by Municipality and County under Alternative Development Scenarios" (1985). These figures are from Scenario III (slow growth), combined Bergen and Hudson development totals "past 2000." Note that even these 15-year projections are less than current developers' proposals.
parking needed would be about 125,000 spaces, requiring a land area of 1.3 square miles.

The above numbers are based on a cumulative riverfront "buildout"; certain developments will face more difficult traffic problems than others. For example, Newport City plans call for 9,000 residences, a 1-million-square-foot shopping mall, 4 million square feet for offices and a 1,200-room convention center to be built on both sides of the severely overcrowded Holland Tunnel entranceway. Lincoln Harbor, the proposed mixed-use development at Weehawken, will add to the complicated traffic problems along Route 495 heading into the Lincoln Tunnel. A more detailed traffic analysis of the impact of various waterfront development levels is forthcoming in a 1985 transportation study for New Jersey DOT.

The way to address the traffic problem is, first, to make some basic street and road improvements to handle the essential riverfront traffic; at the same time, to restrict riverfront parking while ensuring that off-site parking is cheap and readily available; and finally, most critically, to link homes and offices with an effective public transit system.

This scheme is certainly in contrast to standard real estate development outside New York City, which is usually predicated on the availability of free or low-cost on-site parking. Will the lure of the waterfront and proximity to Manhattan be sufficient to win the necessary financial support for housing and office facilities based on this unusual transportation scheme? The support ought to be there, especially if the will to implement the proposal is made very clear from the outset. In any event, the scheme is hardly new. The park-and-ride concept is now a major success in New Jersey and elsewhere throughout the Region. And the notion of keeping the waterfront clear of the automobile has worked beautifully on another long, narrow island across from Manhattan—Roosevelt Island in the East River. As the *New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger observed of Roosevelt Island: "...Wonder of wonders, there really is no automobile traffic—all cars entering the island on the 36th Avenue Bridge from Queens (there has never been automobile access from Manhattan) are dispatched into a vast garage and kept there. Their owners switch to little red mini-buses."

(Accessibility of the Riverfront)

Any successful riverfront transportation system must be able to move people effectively in three different ways: across the Hudson, over or through the Palisades, and up and down the length of the riverfront.

Across the Hudson River

A recent study estimated that at one major site more than 50 percent of those living on the waterfront would have jobs in Manhattan and about 20 percent of those working on the waterfront would be "reverse commuters" from Manhattan each morning. The Hudson River crossings are the George Washington Bridge, the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels, and PATH tunnels in Hoboken and Jersey City. There is also an Amtrak rail passenger tunnel under the Hudson at Weehawken, but it offers no access possibilities for riverfront passengers. There is as yet no ferry boat crossing the Hudson.

The central fact about these crossings is that they are overcrowded, with 215,000 or more people crossing the river each morning. According to the Port Authority, there was a 13 percent increase in this volume between 1980 and 1985 owing to the flourishing office economy in Manhattan and the availability of housing in New Jersey. Even though some 70 percent of all trans-Hudson travelers take buses or trains, the traffic jams at the bridge and tunnels cause 20-30 minute delays. PATH trains are also crowded during rush hours, with ridership up 17 percent since 1980 and 150 people riding in trains intended for 120.

The George Washington Bridge and tunnels were not built with riverfront development in mind. For example, there is no exclusive bus lane into the Lincoln Tunnel from such riverfront towns as Edgewater, North Bergen, West New York, Weehawken and Hoboken. Access to the Holland Tunnel from riverfront points, largely via Henderson Street, is slow and awkward. The PATH stations at Exchange Place and Pavonia in Jersey City and at the Erie Lackawanna Terminal in Hoboken do provide good riverfront access. If properly connected to a length-of-the-river transit system, they would provide the most useful riverfront-Manhattan connection. Indeed, without the PATH system, the riverfront simply could not be developed as planned. While PATH is currently overcrowded, the addition of the proposed ferry routes would serve to reduce this burden.

Over and Through the Palisades

The Palisades present a second major obstacle to riverfront access. The "bridges" over this obstacle are less well recognized than the Hudson
crossings. The key western entranceways to the riverfront must compete with traffic destined for the Hudson crossing. There are other access points. In Jersey City, Grand and Montgomery Streets penetrate to the riverfront, but traffic must pass through the urban street grid. In Hoboken, the 14th Street viaduct and Observer Highway are busy ways to the River. To the north, there are only a few narrow ways down the cliff: Pershing Road in Weehawken, Hillside Road in West New York, Ferry Road in Guttenberg, Bulls Ferry Road in North Bergen, Gorge Road and Route 5 in Edgewater—all relatively inadequate ways to a big “River City.” New means of access must be developed to deal with the Palisades barrier.

Up and Down the Riverfront

Movement up and down the length of the riverfront island is complicated by the absence of a “Broadway” or other continuous north-south street. River Road, which will be a key artery in the “River City,” is now a twisting, two-to-three lane road which makes a brave beginning in Edgewater, runs south through North Bergen, only to end in West New York. It could be continued by connecting it with the undeveloped property to make a connection to proposed Route 185 in Jersey City. There is no acceptable north-south artery between Hoboken and Jersey City. In Jersey City, the closest north-south road to the River is Henderson Street, which is narrow, in poor condition and crosses Holland Tunnel traffic.

If the task of improving riverfront access appears daunting, it should be kept in mind that previous generations were not daunted by the difficulty of using the Hudson riverfront as a vast staging area for freight trains and for trans-Hudson passengers. To provide rail freight access to the riverfront, eight tunnels or rock cuts were excavated through the Palisades into the Meadowlands, and some of these may yet assist in moving passengers to the riverfront. A large trestle once ran from the top of the Palisades to the riverfront, offering trolley service from the Jersey City “Heights” section and Union City down to the riverfront at Hoboken. Other trolley lines ran down the cliff from Cliffsie Park to Edgewater and from Union City to Weehawken, feeding ferry terminals. Massive elevators driven by steam, later electricity, were built to lift horse-drawn wagons and passengers up and down the cliffs. The Palisades were lined with paths, catwalks and stairways for pedestrian access to ferries; and there were ferries all along the River from Edgewater to Jersey City, headed for key points on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. This vast transportation infrastructure was rendered superfluous largely by the automobile, the motor bus and the truck.

The irony, of course, is that with the intense settlement now being prepared for the riverfront, the old transit infrastructure may have to be renewed (albeit in modified form) to save the area from strangulation by the automobile.

What transportation improvements are most needed to sustain riverfront development? What projects should be undertaken first, and why? Those questions can be answered only by a joint State-local-private sector transportation plan, currently being developed. What is offered here are some of the more obvious improvements which should be considered.

ROAD AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Even a very efficient transit system and restrictive riverfront parking regulation cannot prevent the increase in auto traffic which will follow new development. The fact is, there are serious traffic problems now with only 6,729 parking spaces on the riverfront serving municipalities from Fort Lee to Jersey City.

North-South Improvements

North-South improvements could include:
- widening River Road to four lanes with proper turnouts and sufficient right-of-way for a public transit line. The road should be extended south to bypass the Lincoln Tunnel bottleneck and to provide bus access to the Tunnel. Since it may become a key link in the federal-state highway system, River Road ought to come under the jurisdiction of the State for over-all riverfront planning purposes.

River Road, Edgewater. The “main drag” for the northern half of the waterfront will have to be widened, extended and augmented with a transitway to accommodate increased riverfront traffic.
• Henderson Street in Jersey City should also be widened and improved to bypass the Holland Tunnel bottleneck.
• Washington Street ought to be made a continuous thoroughfare from the Morris Canal to north of Exchange Place, particularly to serve Newport City.
• an arterial might be built to bypass the western edge of Hoboken on the Conrail right-of-way from 19th Street in Weehawken to the New Jersey Turnpike extension, where existing frontage roads, interrupted between Montgomery and 14th Street in Jersey City, must be made continuous. This improvement would help relieve Hoboken, lower Jersey City and riverfront streets of through traffic. For this to happen a Conrail freight line would have to be moved west of the Palisades.
• Route 169/185 extension from Bayonne Bridge could provide access all the way to Caven Point and Liberty State Park.

**East-West Improvements**

If a major mixed-use development is constructed astride the Holland Tunnel entrance, then improved east-west access will take on new importance because the Holland Tunnel entranceway itself is already excessively crowded. One option discussed would be to link Tonnelle Avenue to the riverfront through the Palisades, using an abandoned railroad cut—the so-called Bergen Arches and the 10th Street viaduct—to create an elegant landscaped parkway to the water.

**PARKING RESTRICTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The highway improvements listed above will be of little use without a parallel effort to control riverfront auto use; the “improved” highways would still once again be jammed at rush hour owing to the steady rise of auto-dependent commuters. The best way to discourage auto use is to limit parking and make it expensive. Most local parking requirements were drafted with just the opposite goal in mind, to ensure enough on-site parking to alleviate the scramble for spaces on city streets. Some innovative policies have been established in the Exchange Place area of Jersey City. A consistent set of riverfront parking criteria ought to be developed now by State and local officials. But no such program would be practical without providing very substantial additional parking opportunities elsewhere. Intercept parking might be placed west of the Palisades in the Meadowlands at such places as Vince Lombardi Park-and-Ride, the Sports Complex and North Bergen Park-and-Ride.

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*The Hackensack Meadowlands* (foreground), lying directly west of the Palisades, could accommodate new parking facilities to serve waterfront needs.
TRANSITWAY

The key to riverfront development will be an effective public transit system. A transportation system would have to connect the remote intercept parking to all major office and residential developments east of the cliffs and connect all of them with PATH stations in Hoboken and, preferably, at Pavonia and Exchange Place as well. The transiway will meet all three basic transportation needs outlined previously: east-west penetration of the Palisades, significant movement up and down the length-of-the-river, and, via PATH, establishment of an effective trans-Hudson connection.

No transit line, even in the heyday of the trolley and the West Shore Commuter Rail Service, has ever accomplished all that. Yet such a line could be built on the right-of-way of the only major freight line on the riverfront. Moving the Conrail freight line which now runs east of the Palisades to the western side would open up the 48th Street Weehawken Conrail tunnel under the Palisades as a transiway connection between the riverfront and proposed intercept parking in the Meadowlands; it would also free up the right-of-way for north-south movement by transit under the cliff and thence along the water to the PATH station at Hoboken. A southern transiway might be constructed south to Exchange Place and Liberty State Park, possibly serving southwestern Jersey City via the Communipaw right-of-way of the former Jersey Central Railroad, and extending to Bayonne on the Jersey Central right-of-way. Another link under the Palisades might connect Edgewater to the parking intercept at Vince Lombardi Park-and-Ride and to points to the northwest as far as Hackensack via the Susquehanna tunnel beneath Fairview and Cliffside Park.

There are many questions concerning the transiway which remain to be determined, among them the cost effectiveness of a busway versus a light rail (trolley) way, and the route of the north-south transiway through Hoboken. Three alternative routes through Hoboken in particular have been under discussion—one along the riverfront, one down Washington Street, and the other on the western side of town on a Conrail right-of-way. Each of these proposals has its strengths and weaknesses. What is essential is that the principle of a transiway be accepted and a right-of-way for it be set aside as soon as possible. That cannot happen without a decision by Conrail to sell the freight line. The State of New Jersey and Conrail are negotiating the relocation of the line, and we look forward to a favorable outcome.

A clear right-of-way, up and down the length of the River, penetrating the Palisades and offering connection to Manhattan PATH, should be the most effective in generating new development. Portions of the waterfront will be served by bus and others by light rail, depending on location service demands. The system envisaged here will have a right-of-way sufficiently flexible so bus service can be phased out in favor of the trolley as growing demand warrants.

The need for waterfront light rail must be underscored. More than a dozen U.S. cities are now planning light rail systems. Trolley service would be particularly appropriate for a waterfront area where developable land is scarce and where transit service must come very close to housing, shops and offices, and intersect with the walkways and parks. Here, the modern trolley, running quietly and without the bus’s offensive diesel exhaust, is certainly the preferred mode. Moreover, the trolley would quickly become something more than a way to get around. It would become the symbol of the unified riverfront, an attraction in itself and generating ridership for a distinguished “River City.”

The need to get started immediately on a transiway plan is paramount to enable developers to have a firmer idea of where the line should go, to allow for, massing of offices and shops appropriately around transit stops and to allow for sensible scaling back on parking facilities.

A public transiway is predicated on the assumption that PATH trains will be able to handle the additional passengers from the riverfront transiway. One way to open up additional PATH seats is now being planned by the Port Authority. The new ferry service would cross the Hudson from Hoboken to the Wall Street area at the North Cove of Battery Park City. Prior to the institution of such a service, however, it should be demonstrated that it is more cost-effective relative to expanding PATH service. Ferry service can be important especially in promoting riverfront development, but it cannot compete with rapid transit in its ability to penetrate to the heart of Manhattan.

This section has outlined the rather complex and urgent need to suppress normal rates of automobile usage to sustain proposed development. The ideas put forth here—road and highway improvements, reduced parking on-site, promoting parking off-site, and a light rail spine—have been informally advanced by Regional Plan and others since 1982. They have been considered and much discussed by leading planners in Trenton and in the waterfront communities. The light rail alone will cost several hundred million dollars and highway construction will require a similar expenditure. Both will probably be offset by the appreciated value of real estate and by reduced transportation requirements elsewhere in the State. Without these expenditures the waterfront cannot be effectively developed.
LAST CHANCE FOR THE PALISADES

At the turn of the century, the Hudson River Palisades were being blasted to rubble to obtain “trap rock” for new construction, but civic outcry from New York and New Jersey put a stop to the quarrying. Substantial appropriations from both states, coupled with gifts of land, first from J. P. Morgan and later John D. Rockefeller, Jr., helped preserve much of the cliffs and waterfront in Bergen and Rockland Counties.

Landmark legislation passed in 1900 by both New York and New Jersey laid the groundwork for a bi-state commission which ultimately came to supervise Palisades Interstate Park. With its 300-foot cliffs towering above the Hudson, the Park is one of the most beautiful and spectacular in the Region. Two years ago, then Secretary of Interior James Watt designated the Hudson Palisades from Fort Lee, New Jersey north to Sparkill, New York (13 miles along the West Bank of the Hudson) as a National Natural Landmark in recognition of its geological significance. The Palisades stand today as a monument to civic concern, private philanthropy and bi-state cooperation.

By contrast, from the Palisades Park south to Jersey City, where the cliffs are unprotected by law, their condition is a monument to civic neglect and indifference. What makes this situation all the more intolerable is that it is here, south of the Park, that the cliffs provide a very large urban population with a spectacular view of the Hudson, the waterfront and the New York skyline. To be sure, there are some agreeable Palisades parks, particularly those adjacent to Boulevard East, offering a mid-Manhattan panorama. But one also finds cliffs defaced by graffiti and billboards and so overgrown with weeds in the summer that the views are obscured. The cliffs themselves are littered with garbage and everything else from discarded refrigerators to abandoned cars.

That the cliffs remain visible at all, even in a diminished state, is due to their natural ruggedness and the fact that for years there was not much interest in developing the area. They served as a natural barrier separating industrial and shipping waterfront activities from residential and commercial uses atop the cliff. Now, with the passing of waterfront shipping and manufacturing, we can look forward to new marinas, walkways and high class residential, commercial and office structures right on the riverfront.
Just as the new development will breathe new life into a dead waterfront, so too it affords a singular opportunity for the protection of the natural backdrop for the riverfront—the Palisades cliffs. What is required, even in Jersey City where the cliffs are some considerable distance from the water, is that the Palisades should be considered an integral element in planning.

If new developments treat the cliffs as a monumental backdrop—a backyard rock garden—then it should make new developments even more desirable and valuable. Massive buildings that blot out the strong horizontal cliff-top line or that cut into the face of the cliffs ought to be discouraged. Some basic inter-municipal standards are needed to encourage buildings that respect the cliffs and invite views of rock and foliage.

Unfortunately, today there are no design standards to protect the cliffs other than some height restrictions, so there is a real possibility, given the intense development pressure in the area, that the Palisades will be chewed up and lost. Some mistakes are already visible. Apartment towers in Union City, Guttenberg and other Palisades cities have been built right into the cliffs; they are so large and inappropriately sited that they dwarf and obliterate their natural surroundings. If nothing is done to protect the Palisades in lower Bergen and Hudson counties, then that sheer rocky wall, a powerful assertion of nature against the city, may disappear from view forever.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CLIFFS

For many years, civic leaders and the Save the Palisades Association have worked together to protect the cliffs. Nonetheless, even among the residents of the Palisades municipalities there is a limited awareness of that splendid natural feature which distinguishes the area where they live. The cliffs should be protected for many reasons, among them:

- The Palisades are a unique geological feature formed by volcanic action 190 million years ago. Recognized by federal landmark designation in the Interstate Park area, the cliffs should not be obscured without compelling reason within the urbanized area south of the George Washington Bridge.

- The Palisades are elevated anywhere from about 50 feet in Jersey City to some 300 feet in Fort Lee, and they provide a magnificent view of the River and Manhattan skyline. This view is worth protecting, particularly in heavily populated Jersey City and Union City, which are short of light, air and open space.

- Weehawken, West New York and North Bergen have sought to protect their views through adoption of zoning ordinances that limit the height of new buildings at the base of the Palisades to the height of the cliffs themselves. These ordinances protect the view from the cliffs but not the view of them. Indeed, the zoning ordinances seem to invite construction of buildings of massive bulk which will obscure large portions of the cliffside. The North Bergen ordinance in particular, invites new construction “against” the Palisades, as long as it does not spoil the view from the top. The powerful horizontal cliff-top line which literally defines the area, and the contrasting rock and foliage that changes with the seasons, ought to be respected as a splendid backyard rock garden for the new development.

- The Palisades provide acres of wild and undeveloped (if not completely unspoiled) terrain in an area where open space is sorely needed. Regional Plan estimates that Jersey City and Union City alone are short at least 1,000 acres to meet minimum park and open space requirements. The well-worn trails and hangouts attest that children have turned the cliffs into their own “off-limits” playground. But many cliffside residents complain that the cliffs are a nuisance, a hang-out for undesirables, an illegal dumping ground and a haven for rats. One family with outstanding cliff-top property set up a high fence, totally obscuring their view, to protect their sense of safety and security. If the cliffs are not recognized as a parkland and policed and cleaned, they will remain, for many people, a veritable no-man’s land, more of a liability than an asset.

Troy Towers, Union City. The beautiful Palisades destroyed by a monstrous parking garage embedded into the cliffs and overpowered by an apartment building, which blocks a scenic overlook.
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The first and most fundamental need is recognition at the State and local levels that the Palisades from Jersey City to Fort Lee are worth preserving. From that premise, common civic decency dictates a number of actions:

- Prohibition of billboards along the cliffs
- Revision of zoning ordinances to protect the cliffs
- Cleanup of litter, debris and garbage
- Removal of ragweed, poison ivy and other summer nuisance growths which block the view from the cliffs

Certain key cliff parcels should also be acquired as part of a preservation program. The North Bergen Action Group has already led a successful fight to save the wild land between Bulls Ferry and 79th Street, a miniature forest complete with waterfall and overgrown steps (which once led down to the ferry). Eleven species of birds and 35 varieties of plants thrive there. Unprotected and unpolicied, the area has become a grubby hangout, littered with beer bottles and garbage. Regular municipal sanitation and police service should be provided there.

In Weehawken, King’s Bluff is the spectacular massive cliff at the end of King’s Bluff Road, a residential street. It offers a magnificent view of the Lincoln Tunnel helix and the waterfront. Privately owned, it has become a much graffitied and littered hangout. Public acquisition of this site would fit naturally into a cliff protection plan.

Tumulty Park, a small playground in the Heights section of Jersey City at the southern dead end of Ogden Avenue, affords a nice view from the top of the cliffs. According to City officials, that park was accidentally sold. The City is now in court trying to reclaim the parcel. The fact that the park could have been sold in the first place suggests a limited concern for the cliffs and how they should be used.

The southern end of the Palisades is in an agreeable Jersey City neighborhood known as the “Island,” bordered by Trenton, Waldo and Chestnut Streets. At the base of the cliff, there are service yards for PATH trains, lightly-used rail yards and a few industrial uses. Much of the area is vacant now, and more could be available in the future. This would be a logical place for a new park—defining the southern boundary of the Palisades.

There are other parcels which might be acquired. Fine old cobblestone roads like Holland Street and Mountain Road, which snake up the cliffs, could become part of a path-park system. These roads, closed off and unpolicied, have become parking lots and dumps. Old trails and elegant stairs which once let clifftop residents walk to the trolley or a ferry could be rehabilitated. Indeed, a network of paths and green space should link the cliff to the riverfront. New parklands on and below the cliffs will be needed with the increasing population. A thorough study of potential land use along the cliffs is indicated.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CLIFFS

Neither the State of New Jersey nor local governments have any direct responsibility to protect the cliffs. And since portions of the cliffs are privately owned, they can be obstructed or obliterated as taste or market forces dictate. In places,
this has already happened. Legislation to protect the cliffs must allow DEP to promulgate a regulation barring new construction within 50 feet of the face of the cliff from Waldo Junction, Jersey City, to Fort Lee.

The DEP is not the only body which could play a role in Palisades protection. The Jersey Journal has pointed out (10/18/75) that "it is too bad the Palisades Interstate Park, whose boundary extends only to the area of the George Washington Bridge in Fort Lee, was not extended further south." The Palisades Interstate Park Commission could play an important role in developing, if not a continuous park south of Fort Lee, then at least a related series of parks based on existing local parks and new cliff acquisitions. With an increased State appropriation, the Commission could help municipalities maintain and police the area or even assume direct responsibility itself. It should be pointed out that over the years the jurisdiction of the Commission has been extended to include park acreage over a vast area of New York—from the Hudson all the way to the Delaware River. An extension about 10 miles south into Jersey City would be consistent with the Commission's history and allow good park facilities for a large population.

Any program to protect and maintain the cliffs, whether undertaken by a State agency or bi-state Palisades Park Commission, should be carried out in cooperation with local officials and residents of the Palisades municipalities. They have the best understanding of how the cliffs should be protected and policed.

In the absence of State effort to save the Palisades, it will fall on certain municipalities to do what they can, given their limited resources, to protect the cliffs. Jersey City, Weehawken and West New York, in particular, could use the increased tax revenues from new riverfront development to improve parks or even to acquire cliff lands. Responsible developers will recognize that the value of their properties can be enhanced by protecting their "rock garden" backyards. The developer of the Roke Harbor apartments in North Bergen has already agreed to help in cleaning up the nature preserve in the cliffs of Bull's Ferry Road. Such public/private sector cooperation is a course worth following.

A NEW URGENCY

The time is now ripe for a systematic protection effort. The riverfront is changing from an industrial/shipping area to high-class residential, commercial and recreational land uses. Palisades protection, maintenance and preservation should be part of any improvement effort.

But the opportunity to preserve the Palisades can be lost. Recently, two Rutgers University geographers pointed out that, "... the remaining residual open space located along the Palisades has been placed under tremendous developmental pressure. Increased demand for housing in adjacent communities, the forced economic exodus of the middle- and upper-middle class from the Manhattan housing market, the perceived need for additional tax ratables and the extraordinary views across the Hudson River from along the cliff face have resulted in increased pressure to allow continued development. Development of the remaining sites for high-rise apartment complexes will not only block the existing views of New York City, but will also destroy the remaining tracts of undeveloped open space." (Teuvo M. Airola and David Wilson, "Recreational Benefits of Residual Open Space: A Case Study of Four Communities in Northeastern New Jersey," Environmental Management Vol. 6, No. 6 [1982], pp. 471-84.)

Alternatively, the State of New Jersey should commit itself to protect the Palisades. That does not mean calling a halt to development, but it does mean giving some group the authority to review new development to ensure that it is respectful of the cliff. And New Jersey (with New York's consent) should consider legislation giving the Palisades Interstate Park Commission the responsibility and the funds to extend, where possible, Palisades Park all the way to Jersey City. In doing so, the State will be saving a geological treasure and enhancing the quality of life both for the thousands who live "upstairs" atop the cliffs and those who will be living "downstairs" along the riverfront.

Palisades stairway. Palisades protection means reopening old stairways and developing new ones to create a spectacular "vertical" park.
Liberty State Park. This 750-acre park, created from abandoned rail yards, offers the best opportunity anywhere along the River for new public recreational facilities. The restored 1899 Central Rail Road of New Jersey Terminal in the foreground has yet to find an appropriate use.

OTHER WATERFRONT PLANS

LIBERTY STATE PARK

Liberty State Park in Jersey City offers the best opportunity anywhere on the riverfront to satisfy local and regional recreational needs. The Liberty State Action Plan (1983), prepared for New Jersey's Division of Parks and Forestry in consultation with a citizen group called the Liberty State Park Advisory Commission, outlines how the wide open spaces in the Park can be developed.

At the outset, The Action Plan makes the fundamental point that while Liberty State Park should be developed with many new attractions, it is "already a lovely place . . . and should be kept open, with views maintained and (with) minimum structures." The Park now has many attractions: a depot for the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island Ferry, the Jersey Central Rail and Ferry Terminal, an extraordinary waterfront landmark; a picnic and bird watching area; a wildlife sanctuary and wetland preserve; and panoramic views of New York Harbor, the Verrazano Bridge, the Statue of Liberty and Lower Manhattan.

For all that the Park offers, it is still quite undeveloped and could accommodate a great many additional recreational and cultural attractions. The first priority is improved accessibility. It is cut off from a large surrounding urban population by the New Jersey Turnpike, the Morris Canal Basin, and an industrial zone. There is no agreeable pedestrian way into the Park. Bus service from Jersey City is inadequate and from other cities virtually non-existent. Except at the waterfront proper, there are virtually no sidewalks amid the entire 750 acres.

The Action Plan makes a number of useful recommendations to improve auto access. It also suggests a people mover—for example, an antique train—to shuttle users around the vast park. What it overlooks are such fundamental needs as good sidewalks and walkways within the Park and better public transit facilities to get to the Park. Liberty State Park could be the Central Park of the riverfront, serving all the nearby communities and developments to the north and south, but only if linked to a transit system. The Park is a mere 3-4,000 feet from the Pavonia and Exchange Place PATH stations, but it is hard to get to the Park from those stations because of the Morris Canal. An old rail freight trestle crosses the Canal and
could be acquired for a transit or pedestrian right-of-way. A Liberty State Park link to PATH would open up the Park to Jersey City, Hoboken and Newark residents who do not have cars. A landscaped path and bridge would also serve the hundreds of new Harborside employees who would be able to walk to the Park from Exchange Place.

Would Liberty State Park, already the busiest facility in the State Park system, be overwhelmed with crowds? On the contrary, if public transit is strengthened, there will be more room for people because less room will be needed for parking automobiles. Liberty State is a very large park—big enough to accommodate two Bronx Zoos and the New York Botanical Gardens. Crowding should not be a problem if it is planned as an urban park.

The Action Plan proposes a number of inviting new park attractions: a science and technology center, an aquarium, marina, 18-hole golf course, and recreational vehicle park. These attractions should satisfy The Action Plan’s objective of creating a park with “regional, state and national appeal.” Of particular note is the science and technology center, which should rank with first-class science museums in Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. Such a center is the one cultural/educational institution which the metropolitan area lacks in comparison with other urban regions.

In considering what activities should be located in the Park, it is important to stress their appeal not merely to the Region and nation but also to the neighborhoods. If Hudson County were filled with open fields and pristine lakes, this would not matter so much; but the County is really a densely-populated city—a city which fails to meet even minimal standards for recreational open space.

Of particular importance to Hudson County are good swimming facilities. According to a recent U.S. Department of Interior Survey, swimming is the most important outdoor recreational activity, tied for first place with “recreational walking.” There may come a time when the Hudson will be clean enough to swim in safely, but that is still a distant dream, especially in the heavily polluted waters south of the George Washington Bridge. Instead, Hudson County residents avail themselves of a few public pools. One of these is at Liberty State Park’s Cabana Club. This facility is popular, but it is hidden away in an unpleasant area at the extreme west end of the Park, between an industrial site and the Turnpike. The Action Plan calls attention to the “image” of the pool, listing it among “existing dysfunctions,” but it makes no provision for relocating it in a more agreeable area. Surely within the Park’s 750 acres, a place can be found for an attractive and very large open-air swimming pool with a view of the River and the Manhattan skyline. Unlike the proposed golf course and marina, a new swimming pool would probably not be the kind of “self-sustaining” project which The Action Plan espouses, but it would be of immense benefit to Hudson County residents.

Setting aside a portion of the Park for “recreational vehicles” might serve a useful purpose, but is it appropriate for this urban park to be used as a parking lot for motor homes and other large vehicles? More appropriate might be an international youth hostel to meet the significant need within the metropolitan area for low-cost lodging, especially for active young people involved in cycling and hiking. In keeping with the spirit of hospitality represented by the Statue of Liberty, the Park would be a particularly appropriate place to lodge young people from abroad.

Liberty State Park. New sidewalks and paths will be needed as the park is developed so that the pedestrian does not have to compete with the automobile.
MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Many developments on the waterfront (see map page 31) may be termed “mixed-use” because they provide for stores, houses and offices on the same site, but one of the uses often predominates. Port Liberte, at Caven Point, for example, will serve primarily as a residential community built around recreational boating. Harborside, at Exchange Place, may eventually have some housing, but it will be primarily an office development, a logical extension of Wall Street. Newport City in its first phase will have a number of uses but it will seek to establish itself as a major regional shopping center. In Hoboken, the Port Authority Piers will have offices and housing, but what will distinguish this site will be the research and development space associated with the Stevens Institute of Technology. Lincoln Harbor in Weehawken will have a distinct office orientation; from that point north all along the riverfront to Fort Lee, there will be mostly, if not entirely, high-rise apartments and townhouses. Included in this are two landmark buildings in Edgewater, the Ford and Alcoa plants, which can be rehabilitated for residential use.

Whether these developments will add up to a successful and lively waterfront will depend on how well they are designed and planned, especially in regard to public transit, the walkway and Palisades. A review of the tentative plans of several of the major developments raises additional questions regarding design: the relation of these projects to existing neighborhoods, the placement of new development in regard to piers, and the dedication of space for parking.

In order to have a lively waterfront, mixed-use development ought to encourage walking, but at many sites, the offices, shops and housing are too far away from each other. The new Shanghai Red’s restaurant, for example, at the end of a pier at Lincoln Harbor, is well beyond convenient walking distance from the offices, hotel and residences which are planned for the community. Likewise, the proposed Port Liberte commercial development, at the very end of Caven Point pier extending several thousand feet into the Hudson, will be inaccessible to all but the most determined pedestrians. Unless there is some compelling reason to the contrary, piers should be reserved for walking and recreational uses, with parking and road space kept to a minimum. Such a policy would improve the quality of life for office workers and waterfront residents and keep business close to where people live and work.

A second design question concerns the relationship of the new waterfront communities to the older neighborhoods to the west. Wherever possible, streets within the new riverfront community should continue the existing pattern to preserve intact the present view lines of the River. This cannot be accomplished north of Weehawken, where the Palisades intervene, but it is quite possible elsewhere. The principle has been carried out nicely at the Port Authority piers project, which continues the Hoboken street pattern right to the riverfront. The Newport City project, on the other hand, totally ignores the Jersey City street pattern, blocking views from the elegant old Hamilton Park neighborhood. What is proposed for Newport City is a mass of parking garages circling around the periphery of the development like covered wagons, sealing off the River from existing Jersey City neighborhoods. The designers may want the new development to be private and self-contained, but that is contrary to the greater public interest of a waterfront open for all.

Newport City Site, Jersey City. A major mixed-use development will rise on vacant land on both sides of the Holland Tunnel entrance. Careful planning will be necessary to keep this development from overloading already jammed tunnel entrance and feeder streets.

Ford Plant, Edgewater. Fine old riverfront factories offer opportunities for conversion into residential and other uses.
The Newport City project also raises the fundamental question of how much parking should be provided. At the moment, that question is largely determined by zoning ordinance formulas which set minimum parking regulations. Total parking depends on the amount of office and commercial space and the number of residential units proposed. Newport City will not be the only site with massive parking garages. At Lincoln Harbor, for example, provision has been made for 5,000 parking spaces. In the face of these zoning requirements and in the absence of any firm transit alternative, designers have little alternative but to opt for a great deal of parking. There are several objections to this, however. Big parking garages sterilize the riverfront, making it dull and lifeless. Moreover, the availability of inexpensive parking generates traffic and thus promotes congestion. Most developers recognize the need for public transit, but they want to provide ample free parking until their development is a proven success. Later, they argue, the amount of parking per square foot of additional construction can be scaled back. But if parking is readily available for the first tenants, subsequent tenants will demand it as a necessity in a climate where auto access has become the norm. It should be understood from day one that a car will be a liability on the riverfront owing to the very high cost or actual impossibility of parking it.

SEWAGE

The Hudson is one of the world’s loveliest rivers, but south of the George Washington Bridge it is terribly polluted. New Jersey and New York City have blamed each other for this problem, but both are to blame. Presently, all sewage from Manhattan’s West Side north of 14th Street to the Spuyten Duyvil is dumped into the Hudson, untreated. By 1986, the billion-dollar North River treatment plant at 142nd Street should provide primary and disinfection treatment, but secondary treatment will not begin until 1989.

New Jersey’s waterfront municipalities also contribute to the pollution problem because wastewater treatment plants in Jersey City, Hoboken, West New York, North Bergen and Edgewater are obsolete. Most of the Hudson sewage is given such minimal treatment that it does not meet federal primary treatment standards.

The Hudson County municipalities, like their counterparts throughout the country, must build facilities in time to meet a federal deadline for full secondary treatment of sewage by July, 1988. The State DEP has made it plain that new waterfront facilities will not be permitted to open until the waterfront municipalities can demonstrate an ability to treat sewage at secondary level.

Unfortunately, progress in that direction has been discouragingly slow. Even now, with time running out, Hudson County sewage treatment plans remain tentative. Under recent proposals, Jersey City would pipe its sewage under Newark Bay for secondary treatment at the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission Plant in Newark. That plant can handle the additional flow from Jersey City, but that would leave little reserve capacity. (The plant’s capacity would be increased later.) This is a sensible plan, but it requires State legislation allowing Jersey City to join the Passaic Valley Sewerage District, as well as approval by Passaic Valley member municipalities. Bayonne may also want its sewage treated by Passaic Valley (following the same procedures), or it may upgrade its own plant or have its sewage treated on Staten Island.

North of Jersey City, sewage treatment planning remains in flux after years of debate and discussion. Hoboken must upgrade its existing plant, which also serves Weehawken, to meet the federal secondary treatment deadline. But should the capacity of that plant be increased enough to serve North Bergen/Guttenberg and West New York? Or should those municipalities improve their own plants? On this critical question, the Hudson County Utilities Authority is in conflict with Hoboken, West New York and North Bergen. How this question is settled will have a direct bearing on how quickly proposed development at Lincoln Harbor, Weehawken and West New York can proceed. Developers have expressed willingness to build on-site treatment plants to handle their own sewage until the major public facilities are built, but DEP is reluctant to accede, considering it is imperative to move toward a comprehensive region-wide approach instead.

Sewer outlet, Edgewater. The beautiful Hudson is polluted by raw and inadequately-treated sewage from both New York and New Jersey.
Hudson waterfront cities. This urban area is one of the most densely populated places in the country; it does not even come close to meeting the minimal recreation needs of its people. The waterfront offers a last chance to provide the area with needed "breathing space."

WATERFRONT COMMISSION

This report has argued that satisfactory Hudson River development depends on cooperative, length-of-the-river planning. A transportation study and a walkway plan have recently been completed, but no agency yet exists to ensure that new development will harmonize with the rest of the riverfront. The DEP's Division of Coastal Resources comes closest to filling that role, but it is not authorized to be the kind of agency that is needed.

In 1966, Regional Plan Association recommended the establishment of a State Hudson River planning agency with a broad-based local, private and public representation; the idea was reiterated by the State's own Hudson Study Commission in 1980 and in proposed legislation. But that agency is not yet a reality. With major development imminent, we need it now. Such an agency would benefit all of the groups most concerned with waterfront development.

COMPETING PRIORITIES

Developers

Developers want to have their projects built and yield returns as quickly as possible. But local governments and the DEP, to whom they must present their plans for permits, often cannot answer questions about a project's impact, especially in regard to traffic, sewage disposal, and the amount of land which should be set aside for the walkway or parks. Municipalities must sometimes hire their own consultants to deal with those questions or request that the developers pay for additional studies and for appropriate redesign; either way, there are delays. There are extra costs to the developers when government agencies review proposals without a sound planning structure. Recognizing that each project has positive and negative ramifications for other projects along the shore, the developers have recently formed their own waterfront group to share information about those projects and problems of mutual concern. This group may also lobby for the sort of major infrastructure improvements necessary to make most large-scale projects possible. This suggests that developers—notwithstanding their inevitable protestations regarding the red tape of a waterfront commission—have come to recognize the need for a regional approach.

Civic Organizations

Civic organizations concerned over the consequences of proposed development have long sought to keep the waterfront free from undesirable uses,
protect the Palisades, maintain public access to the riverfront and develop the walkway and public parkland. These groups, including Bayonne Against Tanks, Hoboken Environment Committee, Weehawken Environment Committee, Citizens Committee of Hudson County, SHORE, Save the Palisades Association, and North Bergen Action Group have often proved effective in making their cases before local planning boards and other agencies. But they, too, recognize that the riverfront is one long strip and that a victory in their community will not protect them from land use decisions elsewhere on the riverfront. Several of these civic groups recently joined forces to form the Waterfront Coalition of Hudson and Bergen to press for a State waterfront commission.

Local Governments

Local governments’ priorities are complex. Municipalities have lost many of their waterfront industrial/transportation ratables and want the area redeveloped to strengthen their depleted tax base. While property taxes in the municipalities are much higher than average, the tax issue is not the whole story. As recent elections in Jersey City and Hoboken suggest, voters are concerned that the establishment of a “gold coast” will bring gentrification, soaring rents and possible eviction. Civic groups have also expressed concern that the tax benefits of development will not offset the increased cost of municipal services and traffic problems. Some local planning officials have expressed concern that they lack the expertise to weigh the costs and benefits of new developments. They would welcome State assistance, provided it would not mean an end to home rule and the right to determine what is best for their local waterfront.

Transportation Agencies

Transportation agencies also have a keen interest in the decisions on the waterfront. Of these numerous public and private utility and transportation authorities concerned with waterfront development, none has a greater stake than the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The Port Authority has two major roles. As a developer, it will be seeking to convert the old Hoboken piers into a major mixed-use project. As the transportation agency charged with expediting trans-Hudson traffic, it faces 20- to 30-minute rush hour delays at the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels and the George Washington Bridge.

In rush hours, PATH trains are packed to capacity. The Port Authority naturally supports a comprehensive approach to Hudson waterfront planning, knowing full well that unplanned development will aggravate an already critical trans-Hudson traffic problem.

One might imagine that NJ DOT and NJ Transit would have a prominent role, considering that riverfront success or failure ultimately hinges on traffic control. In fact, neither agency has control over the waterfront parking regulations or land uses that generate traffic. Those issues are almost entirely the concern of 8 local governments. To its credit, NJ DOT recognized early the potential magnitude of the waterfront traffic problem and commissioned a waterfront transportation study. But the implementation of that study rests not with NJ DOT but with local governments, the Governor’s office, the Legislature, and possibly the DEP.

State Government

State government’s current authority over waterfront development is limited. The Legislature has shown little interest as yet in addressing problems of Hudson riverfront planning. The Governor, through the Office of Policy and Planning, has established a waterfront committee principally to promote and expedite development. The office has also performed a useful service by bringing the transportation problem to the attention of the private sector, State, local and civic leaders, but it has no statutory authority to regulate development. State regulatory power rests primarily with the Division of Coastal Resources in the DEP. Legislation dating to 1914 (NJS A 12:5.3 as amended) states that “all plans for the development of any waterfront upon any navigable water or stream . . . shall be first submitted to the Department of Environmental Protection.” The DEP defines the waterfront area as extending back from the mean high water line a maximum of 500 feet. Construction cannot take place within that area without a DEP permit attesting that the new development meets air, water quality and energy conservation standards. The DEP also requires the developer to provide public waterfront access. It appears now that the DEP will not issue a permit without the applicant’s having demonstrated the adequacy of transportation to the site. This position, which we commend, is consistent with the Department’s general mandate to protect the environment, especially regarding air and water quality and energy conservation. The DEP, through judicious review of permit applications, will attempt to keep the waterfront from strangling in traffic. That may prove particularly difficult because a number of important projects will be built beyond its 500-foot jurisdiction.

Even within its jurisdiction, the DEP lacks the authority to protect the Palisades or to set design standards for developments. Furthermore, while
it can require public access to the waterfront, it
docks the funds to purchase the land needed to
make the walkway continuous. And without a
general plan as a guide, the DEP has difficulty in
being flexible in its permit awards, fearing perhaps
that concessions in one case may set precedents
for the whole waterfront. In any event, it will be
exceedingly difficult to plan through a permit-
issuing process. Barbara E. Kauffman, an urban
waterfront planner formerly with the DEP, has
written: “DEP is in a reactive position, and makes
each decision on a case-by-case basis, with little
ability to take into account cumulative impacts on
a regional and sub-regional level.”

A REGIONAL APPROACH

Having examined the priorities of various
groups (public and private) concerned with water-
front development, we suggest that if not unanim-
ity, then at least substantial agreement can be at-
tained on the following set of goals:
- The riverfront should be developed substantially
  with taxable properties;
- Development ought to be well-built and designed
to make the riverfront a lively, humanly-scaled
  environment;
- Private development should provide for public
  riverfront access and Palisades preservation;
- The riverfront will require an effective public
  transit system with rules to restrict the amount
  of parking;

The existing government agencies are not in a
position to allow for the above goals to be realized.
Since the risks of a failure to plan are high—loss of

a great public amenity, loss of tax ratables and se-
vere traffic congestion—it would be prudent to
consider the establishment of a new kind of plan-
ing agency.

What should be the structure and function of
such an agency? That question was well-addressed
in 1980 by the Hudson River Waterfront Study
Commission. Legislation based on the Commission’s
recommendations (Assembly Bill 2318) was intro-
duced and never passed, but it remains a useful
starting point for considering a waterfront com-
mmission.

The bill proposed a 27-member commission
consisting of 11 Palisades and waterfront mayors
and 16 others appointed by the Governor. The
27-member commission would appoint a 7-person
executive committee to work with an executive
director and staff to prepare a master plan and to
review development permits within waterfront
and Palisades conservation districts. The area
would stretch roughly from Fort Lee to Bayonne
and from the water to the first paved road; it
would include a Palisades district from the base of
the cliff, including the cliff face and cliff top to the
first public road to the west.

Within these areas, municipal zoning ordinances
would be required to conform with the commis-
sion’s plan. Otherwise, municipalities would retain
their regular home rule authority over the devel-
oment process with the commission authorized
to review permit decisions on appeal.

The commission’s plan would include a walk-
way, transitway, Palisades protection and, where-
ever possible, at least one waterfront park per
municipality. It would encourage development respectful of wetlands and air and water quality, while providing “early and continuous opportunity for public participation in proposing and considering amendments to the plan.” This approach still makes sense, though we would suggest the need for civic group as well as mayoral representation on the commission.

One provision of the bill proposed that the commission have the power merely to recommend to the Legislature an inter-municipal tax sharing plan. We would go a step further and require tax sharing as part of the bill. If revenues generated by new development were shared in some equitable manner, waterfront municipalities would be freed of the necessity of pursuing rates no matter what the cost to the environment and the general welfare. The commission should also be empowered to issue bonds, underwritten by revenues from a tax on new development. Revenues generated either through sale of bonds or direct tax collections would be used by the commission for transportation, water, sewer and other crucial improvements.

Why have Assembly Bill 2318 and its successors made no significant progress in the Legislature? Until recently, the bill seemed unnecessary. It appeared doubtful whether any significant development would take place on the riverfront. Moreover, neither the municipalities nor developers wanted a commission because they feared that another layer of government would delay development and cut into the municipal share of new tax revenues.

But those attitudes have changed since development is being held up precisely because there is no length-of-the-river plan to cope with its serious consequences. Moreover, recent Hudson County elections resulted in losses to incumbents whose reputations were built on their ability to promote development. Those elections indicate that public opinion does not necessarily believe that such development will be an unmitigated blessing. There are fears that, if unplanned, development can diminish the quality of life even in those communities which reap the benefits of increased tax revenues.

A riverfront commission, properly funded and staffed, could address those problems by defining transit and open space requirements and appropriate levels of development. It would expedite rather than inhibit the development process. And by opening it up to the planning process to the public, it will quiet fears about the long-term consequences of development.

Time is running out. Waterfront and cliffside developers deserve a gubernatorial and legislative response to their problems. So indeed does the tri-state Region, for ultimately, the Hudson riverfront and the Palisades are precious resources to be enjoyed by everyone.

In the absence of an initiative to establish a riverfront planning commission, the State may try to muddle through, using the DEP’s permit power to regulate development. But waterfront development will inevitably be less attractive and less profitable than would otherwise be the case. And the public—shut out of DEP review proceedings—will lose control over the destiny of its riverfront.

Among the states, New Jersey has been the most inventive in developing mechanisms appropriate for planning special geographic regions: the Pinelands, Meadowlands, and Delaware and Raritan Canal commissions come to mind. The Pinelands and Meadowlands bills were bitterly contested, but those commissions are now accepted as important and useful planning mechanisms. A commission is needed for the same reasons that impelled the creation of those other agencies: the riverfront must be planned cooperatively as a single entity, not chopped up piecemeal. The failure to implement length-of-the-river planning would be devastating for the State and Region. More positively, if a regional riverfront planning agency is established, New Jersey can capitalize on its geographical opportunities and create for itself and the nation a magnificent “River City.”
Site 1 — Danro (Edgewater): Proposed 153-dwelling-unit building, marina on five-acre site, Park St. and River Rd.

Site 2 — Shelter Bay Club (Edgewater): Proposed twin 18-story residential towers and townhouses totalling 279 units.

Site 3 — Admirals Walk (Edgewater): American Landmark Developers completed two 11-story buildings totalling 300 units, near Route 6.

Site 4 — Old Ferry Plaza (Edgewater): Commodore Plaza Assoc. proposes 540-unit high-rises/townhouses at Dempsey and River Rd.

Site 5 — Shoreline Assoc. (Edgewater): Proposal for two 5-story buildings of 156 units, including 8 townhouses and 82-slip marina at Garden Pl. and River Rd.

Site 6 — Alcoa Plant (Edgewater): American Landmark Developers to convert landmark factory into 709 luxury apartments, Russel Ave. and River Rd.


Site 8 — Ford Plant (Edgewater): Edgewater Assoc. to convert waterfront plant to 722 luxury apartments; major mixed-use development adjoining site also proposed.

Site 9 — Lever Brothers (Edgewater): Plant converted to research/development, River Rd. and County Line.

Site 10 — Roc Harbor (North Bergen): Construction for three 16-story towers with 551 units; 17 four-story low-rises.

Site 11 — Shelter Innovations (North Bergen): 265 units residential development (townhouses, six-story mid-rise condominiums and a recreational marina).

Site 12 — Guttenberg: Prudential may develop the vacant site into a park.

Site 13 — Arcorp (West New York-Weehawken): Two waterfront miles, 300 acres, Arthur E. Imperatore received first permit to develop 1,600-slip marina; major mixed-use development planned.

Site 14 — Lincoln Harbor—Hertz Mountain Industries (Weehawken): 70 acres of former Seaplane container port has requested State permit for 210,000 square-foot office building, 250-300-unit residential development and transportation center for 200 buses and 1,800 autos. Shanghai Red’s Restaurant, 14,500-square-foot facility seating 600, opened recently. Major expansion beyond original request is planned.

Site 15 — Hoboken Shipyard (Hoboken): Plans to build 1,600 dwelling units and marina.

Site 16 — Port Authority Piers (Hoboken): Three piers and 130 acres north of Erie Lackawanna Terminal. Port Authority proposes 1,500-unit housing, 1.4 million square feet offices, 150,000 square feet retail, 400-room hotel, and 750,000 square feet research/development and 600-800 boat slips.

Site 17 — Newport City (Jersey City): Glimcher/Simon/Lefkak proposes mixed-use development on 270 acres near Holland Tunnel and Pavonia Ave. PATH: multi-phase proposals in excess of 9,000 dwelling units, 1.2 million square feet retail, 7.2 million square feet office, 1,200 hotel rooms and 250 boat slips.

Site 18 — Harsimus Cove (Jersey City): A-S-H Development proposes on 95 acres (6th St. viaduct, Harsimus rail yards) 1,500 units housing and 750,000 square feet office/retail.

Site 19 — Harborside Terminal (Jersey City): Exchange Pl. near PATH station, Waterfront Assoc. converting 385,000-square-foot building for Banker’s Trust back office. A 500-car garage will be built off-site; additional plans call for 125 dwelling units, 4.5 million square feet offices, 300-room hotel, marina and plaza.

Site 20 — Exchange Place Park (Jersey City): Park on an L-shaped pier structure.

Site 21 — Evertrust (Jersey City): Between Harborside Terminal and Liberty Harbor North; a total of 800,000 square feet of office space to be developed by Evergreen Marine Ltd. in two phases.

Site 22 — Liberty Harbor North (Jersey City): At Grand, Henderson and Canal Basin, a 75-acre site, Peter M. Mocco has proposed development for 2,500 dwelling units, 93,000 square feet retail, 400-room hotel and 300-slip marina.

Site 23 — Liberty State Park (Jersey City): Former Jersey Central freight yards, 800 acres. Terminal beautifully restored. Future site of New Jersey Science and Technology Center, golf course and other attractions. Presently ferry service to Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island.

Site 24 — Port Liberté (Jersey City): Caven Point, 105 acres. Sperry Group proposes 1,676 dwelling units around canals in village setting, 200 marina slips and 540 canal boat slips, 300-room hotel, and 46,000 square feet for offices.

Site 25 — Greenville Yards (Jersey City): Port Authority purchased rail yards as a site for potential industrial facility.

Site 26 — Port Jersey (Jersey City): Port Authority site, previously proposed for coalport; alternative use now being sought.
One idea for the waterfront—the cliff preserved, a waterfront walkway and recreational boating.

Source: American Landmark [First Shelter Corporation] and Beyer, Blinder, Belle.