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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG JOINS WEST HARLEM COMMUNITY TO
CELEBRATE OPENING OF WEST HARLEM PIERS PARK**

\$20 Million, Two-Acre Park Connects West Harlem to the Hudson River Greenway and Features a Docking Pier, Fishing Pier, Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths, Public Art and Landscaped Open Space

Creating New Open Space Throughout the City and Making Neighborhoods More Attractive and Livable is Part of City's Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Governor David A. Paterson, Congressman Charles B. Rangel, and Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert C. Lieber today joined community leaders and elected officials to celebrate the opening of West Harlem Piers Park. The \$20 million, two-acre park connects West Harlem to the Hudson River greenway and features a docking pier, a fishing pier, bicycle and pedestrian paths and landscaped open space. Creating new open space throughout the City and making neighborhoods more attractive and livable is an important part of the City's *Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan* to create jobs for New Yorkers today, implement a vision for long-term economic growth, and build affordable, attractive neighborhoods. The event, which took place at the new park on 132nd Street and the Hudson River, was also attended by Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer, State Senator Bill Perkins, Assembly Members Daniel O'Donnell and Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Council Member Robert Jackson, Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Economic Development Corporation President Seth W. Pinsky, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Chief Operating Officer Hope Knight, Community Board 9 Chair Pat Jones, WE ACT for Environmental Justice Executive Director Peggy Shepard, sculptor Nari Ward, Percent for Art Director Sara Reisman, and representatives from the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

"The opening of West Harlem Piers Park provides New Yorkers with new recreational opportunities and greater access to the waterfront," said Mayor Bloomberg. "In addition to a fishing pier, public art and seating areas, the park completes an unbroken stretch of greenway along the Hudson River that will provide pedestrians and cyclists with even more recreational opportunities. I would like to thank the community members and elected officials from all levels of government for coming together to support the revitalization of the West Harlem waterfront."

(more)

“Harlem is a wonderful community. And today, with the opening of this park, life in Harlem has become a bit more wonderful,” said Governor Paterson. “Over the last two decades, the Hudson River has gone from an industrial area to a recreational paradise. However, this half-mile of West Harlem riverfront – from Riverside Park to Riverbank State Park – remained nothing more than a parking lot. Now, this parking lot has been transformed into a magnificent waterfront park which will become a popular destination for walking, jogging, bicycling, fishing and boating. I would like to thank all of the elected officials and community organizations who worked so hard to make this day possible.”

“I can’t begin to tell you of the years that we have tried to beautify our waterfront as some other communities have done. I only wish that more people – especially those world leaders and high-level officials who have graced our village of Harlem in the past – could be here to celebrate this great day for our community. In unveiling these piers, we inaugurate a public space that will not only be enjoyed by local residents and their children, but also a beautiful project that will spur local business and tourism,” said Congressman Rangel. “It’s a product of years of hard work and collaboration with a number of players, from government agencies like the EDC to the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone to community-based organizations like WEACTION and Community Board 9. It’s a small example of the potential that can be realized when we all work together to develop land and space for the public good.”

“Today’s event is noteworthy, not only because it celebrates a new, exciting open space for the West Harlem community, but it is also the culmination of an extensive collaboration among a great diversity of stakeholders – community organizations, environmental groups, and local, state and federal agencies,” said Deputy Mayor Robert C. Lieber. “It is a great example of what can be achieved when people come together to work for a common good, and I thank all who played a role in making today’s celebration possible.”

The West Harlem Piers Park project transformed a parking lot between 125th and 135th streets into an attractive and accessible waterfront amenity. The new piers support various activities including fishing, water tours, boating and ecological exploration. The piers can also accommodate a variety of vessels, allowing excursion boats and water taxis to dock in West Harlem. The bicycle and pedestrian paths provide a critical link in the waterfront greenway, creating a continuous path along the Hudson River, from the Battery to Dyckman Street. A portion of the park was completed and opened to the public last fall, and now it is open in full. Funding for the \$20 million park was provided from a number of sources, including the City, State and Federal governments, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, the Manhattan Borough President, the City Council and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.

“When I was growing up, New York didn’t have that many parks – and the ones we had, you didn’t want to spend too much time in,” said Borough President Stringer. “This new beautiful park is good news for West Harlem residents who have worked hard and long to reclaim access to our magnificent riverfront. Our city green space is a symbol of the city’s recent prosperity and we have to make sure we support and fund our parks, even during an economic downturn. I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Benepe for the great work they are doing in greening our city.”

“This project is a reality only because so many people pushed from so many different directions to transform the waterfront and make it more accessible,” said Council Member

Jackson. "I am delighted by the result and grateful for the energy and effort of the West Harlem community. Wouldn't Henry Hudson be surprised if he happened to sail by?"

"The opening of West Harlem Piers Park continues Mayor Bloomberg's commitment to connect New Yorkers to the waterfront and join neighborhoods with greenways," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Benepe. "Thanks to a true partnership between community members and elected officials, we have transformed this former parking lot into a green oasis along the Hudson River that provides a crucial link in the Hudson River greenway, which is now continuous from Battery Park to Dyckman Street."

"West Harlem Piers Park symbolizes a return to the past, when long-since demolished piers in this area were used by ferries to transport people to New Jersey and upstate New York," said NYCEDC President Pinsky. "Improving access to our waterfronts and increasing waterborne transportation is one of this Administration's goals for the five boroughs. Today's celebration signifies that we are that much closer to achieving those goals. I am pleased that EDC has been able to play a role in the development of the West Harlem Master Plan and this wonderful open space."

"The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation's multi-million dollar investment in West Harlem Piers Park represents our continuing effort to help revitalize all of the communities in Upper Manhattan from north to south, east to west, and river to river," said Hope Knight, UMEZ's Chief Operating Officer. "Our goal in providing financial support for this undertaking was to help create a recreational anchor on the west end of 125th Street that links it to a rich cultural and vibrant commercial corridor."

"The West Harlem Piers Park is the culmination of the dream and the vision of a strong process with the community of West Harlem and City, State and Federal officials and agencies to enrich and expand experiences and opportunities for all ages," said Community Board 9 Chair Pat Jones. "This project serves as a model of what can be accomplished when everyone pulls together for the betterment of the community."

"The West Harlem Piers Park opened today represents the best example of true community and government partnership," said WE ACT for Environmental Justice Executive Director Peggy Shepard. "WE ACT for Environmental Justice is proud to have been the co-sponsor, along with CB 9, of the community visioning process that gave birth to the idea of restoring the waterfront at 125th Street and the Hudson River."

Public art displayed in the park by local artist Nari Ward was commissioned through the Department of Cultural Affairs' Percent for Art Program. A series of sculptures, titled *Voice*, was inspired by the local residents who would frequently fish at this site, and references the eyelet guide of the fishing rod. The sculptures are accompanied by *Signage Barriers*, a series of street-sign-inspired text. Words were drawn from surveys Ward conducted with community members, asking about their memories of the area. Mr. Ward was also inspired by the history of the native peoples that made this area their home, and the changing industrial and natural landscape of the Hudson River. Ward's mysterious, poignant and playful installation suggests a furtive and engaging take on the idea of landmark, collective memory, and the subjective nature of vision; opening up timely questions about shared experiences, loss, renewal and memory.

“The Voice series and Signage Barriers, Nari Ward’s first permanent public art installation in the United States, together offer an evocative interpretation of West Harlem’s storied history, people, and spaces,” said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin. “The Percent for Art program integrates artists into design planning for City spaces, and Mr. Ward’s inspiring installation is a wonderful example of what is possible when contemporary art and smart landscape architecture come together.”

“The *Voice* series and *Signage Barriers* result from extended reflection and research on West Harlem’s unique commercial and transportation history, from its pre-colonial importance in the economic lives of Native peoples, to the effects of mid-nineteenth-century industrialization on the extension of the Hudson River Railroad,” said sculptor Nari Ward. “Many thanks to the West Harlem community for inspiring me, and to the Department of Cultural Affairs *Percent for Art* program, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Economic Development Corporation for selecting me to commemorate the shared experiences, thoughts and memories inherent in this dynamic space.”

Mayor Bloomberg announced the West Harlem Master Plan in October of 2002 with the goal of revitalizing the area between 125th and 135th Streets, Broadway and the Hudson River in West Harlem. The plan calls for the transformation of neglected City-owned land, various transportation improvements to support the neighborhood’s growth, and land-use policies to promote a greater variety of uses. City Planning and NYCEDC have worked closely with the community, including Community Board 9 and West Harlem Environmental Action, to advance plans for the area, receiving extensive input from working committees made up of various stakeholders including elected officials, government agencies and community organizations.

The City’s *Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan* is a comprehensive strategy to bring New York City through the current economic downturn as fast as possible. It focuses on three major areas: creating jobs for New Yorkers today, implementing a long-term vision for growing the city’s economy, and building affordable, attractive neighborhoods in every borough. Taken together, the initiatives that the City has launched to achieve these goals will generate thousands of jobs and put New York City on a path to economic recovery and growth. To learn more about the plan, visit nyc.gov. Recently, the City has announced:

- The City will use nearly \$32 million to train 10,000 New Yorkers for jobs.
- New space for 20 small businesses in Bushwick, creating more than 80 industrial jobs.
- The citywide “Fashion’s Night Out” event to support retailers in all five boroughs.
- The start to construction of the International Gem Tower, which will house 3,000 jobs.
- Start of review process for Kingsbridge Armory project creating 1,200 permanent jobs.
- City’s Workforce1 Centers in Harlem and Jamaica received awards for innovation.
- Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program to encourage grocery stores.
- City-supported loans unavailable from banks to help small businesses stay in operation.
- Three new Financial Empowerment Centers offering free, one-on-one financial coaching.
- Stimulus funding to help the City provide summer jobs for 51,000 young New Yorkers.
- The opening of New Hope Walton Project, housing for low-income residents in Harlem
- New affordable housing at Gateway Building, a long-vacant structure in the South Bronx.
- The Harlem Business Assistance Fund to help businesses relocate to the 125th Street area.
- The expansion of NYC Business Express to help businesses obtain permits and licenses.
- New international cruise activity, growing New York City’s 13,000-job cruise industry.

- Steps to help New York City’s bioscience companies compete for Federal funding.
- The “Nine in ’09” campaign to promote economic activity in diverse neighborhoods.
- A Center for Economic Opportunity program put 4,000 low-income New Yorkers in jobs.
- Stimulus-funded community development projects that will strengthen neighborhoods.
- Stimulus-funded Housing Authority projects that will create jobs for 3,255 New Yorkers.
- The start of construction of 103 units of affordable housing in Brownsville.
- A plan to protect area character and expand commercial opportunities in Sunset Park.
- The opening of Home Depot in the South Bronx creating 200 new permanent jobs.
- Legislation that will green buildings and create 19,000 construction jobs.
- The latest round of training funds to help small businesses train their employees.
- The final tally of 1,673 additional jobs created at the new Yankee Stadium.
- The placement of 50 laid-off New Yorkers into positions at entrepreneurial companies.
- New York City achieved a record 5,000 job placements through the first quarter of 2009.
- Help for a beer distributor to create 55 permanent and 30 construction jobs in the Bronx.
- Green projects at the Brooklyn Navy Yard are creating more than 1,700 permanent jobs.
- A Federal grant to create green jobs as part of the City’s MillionTreesNYC campaign.
- Comprehensive initiatives to support the nonprofit sector and its 490,000 jobs.
- Federal stimulus transportation projects that will create or preserve 32,000 jobs.
- New automated water meter readers that could help businesses retain or create 550 jobs.
- New programs to provide training and resources for City’s future entrepreneurs.
- Steps the City is taking to help small businesses adapt to conditions and avoid layoffs.
- More than 50,000 New Yorkers claimed the City’s Child Care Tax Credit in its first year.
- 11 new initiatives to support the financial services sector and promote entrepreneurship.
- A plan for Coney Island that will create 6,000 permanent and 25,000 construction jobs.
- A plan to create and retain 400,000 jobs over the next six years.

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