

BCEQ Statement on FreshDirect and the South Bronx

Since 1971, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) has been in the forefront of battles to protect The Bronx Ecology.

The Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) joins in formally supporting the efforts of the South Bronx Unite! in the fight for their neighborhood's appropriate waterfront land uses. All over the world, old fashioned industrial uses on the water's edge has been overwhelmingly dismissed in favor of a community's waterfront that provides access, recreation, nature and maritime resources.

The Bronx Council for Environmental Quality seeks to establish — as an Inherent Human Right — a sound, forward-looking environmental policy regarding an aesthetic, unpolluted, environment protecting a natural and historic heritage. We believe that a transparent approach to land use is the only way to accomplish this forward looking environmental policy. Toward this end, we have the Low Impact Development doctrine on our web page¹. In brief we believe that “Every development project should make at least one environmental condition in its vicinity better and make none worse.”

The original idea for the Harlem River Yards was to create a rail freight facility that would reduce truck traffic. What we now have instead is a facility that increases truck traffic.

For the last ten years, BCEQ has been working on protecting the Harlem River by identifying stakeholders, their issues and concerns. We have been successful -- the federal government recognized these efforts last year, when both the Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds were nominated as one of eight rivers nationally, to be in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. We have been working with state and city agencies on this new initiative.

The overarching vision for the Bronx waterfront of the Harlem River is a contiguous waterfront park. This is a fundamental consensus embraced by several generations of city and state agencies, elected officials, and their constituents. It has been outlined in some 25 plans that been developed, refined, and re-issued -- all with public participation over the same number of years. Moreover, the Bronx River Greenway has been planned, designed and funded for years.² The people of the borough of the Bronx want a contiguous greenway along its waterways for boating, running, walking, fishing, and otherwise recreating. To find out that there is a new project, funded by public monies, that does not support the creation of said greenway, is very disturbing.

An Environmental Impact Statement that will daylight the process and answers the questions raised by decades of decision making policies and comprehensive waterfront plans concerning the greenway, as well as other matters of health and safety that the FreshDirect project ignores, is imperative. The fact that there is no enhancement of coastal ecology in the present usage proposed, would itself suggest that enhanced water edge options have not been part of the planning process for this development. March 26, 2013

¹ www.bceq.org/category/projects/low-impact-development/

² www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/bike/gpreal.shtml#reality