

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun fact on the occasion of the opening of Urban Swimming: A New Age for New York

July 16, 2022, 11am-3pm

Pier 17 (89 South Street) to Pier 35 (260 South Street) in Manhattan

New Yorkers used to swim in their rivers all the time!

“The East River was the place for swimming, and as early as April and as late as October the refreshing waters of the East River, free entirely at that time from pollution, offered the small boy all the joys that now come to the winter or summer bather on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean,” Former Governor, Alfred E. Smith, *Up to Now*, 1929.

“The popular swimming place was the dock at the foot of Pike Street, built well into the river, and there was a rather good-natured caretaker who paid no attention to small boys seeking the pleasure and recreation of swimming in the East River.” Former Governor, Alfred E. Smith, *Up to Now*, 1929.

Floating baths existed in New York from at least the early 19th century. Before the industrial revolution, there were 15 floating baths in New York City’s rivers and in 1911, 1,818,721 patrons used them, which was about 40% of the population at the time. They were open from late June or early July to early October. - New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

“The city’s first free public floating baths debuted in the Hudson and East Rivers in 1870, expanding to 15 by 1890. The baths were 95 feet long and 60 feet wide, floated on eight pontoons placed four on each side. In the center of each floating bath was a large well divided into two parts, one 93 feet long and 34 feet wide for adults, and one 70 feet long and 8 feet wide for children. The depth of the water in the large well was 4 ½ feet and in the small one 2 ½ feet. There were 68 dressing rooms opening upon a small gangway around the edge of the well.” - New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

On December 19, 2021, the New York City Department of City Planning released its latest edition of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, billed as “a 10-year vision for an equitable, resilient, and healthy waterfront across the five boroughs.” This time in that plan, the city called for swimming with a key strategy stated to “Expand swimming opportunities where appropriate safety, ambient water quality, and routine monitoring and reporting can be demonstrated.” - New York City Department of City Planning

We gratefully acknowledge the Hudson River Foundation, the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program and the Waterfront Alliance in their support of this project.