

**DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes
Bronx: Eastchester Bay, East River, Bronx River
September 15, 2020**

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **the Bronx: Eastchester Bay, East River and Bronx River**. There were over 60 attendees at this meeting.

The workshop kicked off with a presentation by Michael Marrella, Director of Waterfront and Open Space Division at DCP, to introduce the preliminary issues and goals that the next plan will address. The meeting then broke into small groups for discussion for everyone to share their thoughts for the future of the waterfront. The main questions asked were: Which of the goals resonate the most with you? Which ones can we improve? What is missing? After this discussion, everyone returned to the main group to share the top highlights from each breakout room.

Breakout Discussion Highlights:Group 1

Group 1 focused their discussion on public access, water quality and resiliency. Participants called for more public access to the waterfront in places like City Island, especially for active uses like boat launches, and more hiking, biking, and fishing along the water. The importance of engaging and educating New Yorkers on day to day changes in water quality was also discussed. On resiliency, participants spoke in favor of more soft and resilient shorelines, and the possible need for managed retreat. The group advocated for strong community engagement in waterfront planning processes.

Other key highlights included:

- We should encourage youth to participate in resiliency projects and partner with city public schools / DOE
- Ferry service expansion to/from City Island
- There should be more regional coordination on water quality issues because of upstream pollution

Group 2

Group 2 spoke about a range of waterfront quality of life issues, primarily focusing on City Island. Orchard Beach was discussed in particular. Participants spoke in favor of preserving the natural character of the beach, though also noting a desire to see NYC Ferry expand to Orchard Beach. The group also discussed the proposed Gateway project on City Island, as well as water quality issues in the Bronx River. Key highlights included:

- It is challenging to get public agencies to look at the Bronx River holistically due to it crossing multiple municipal and agency jurisdictions. This makes it difficult to address problems like water quality, public access, and flood resiliency holistically.
- The proposed Gateway project site is owned by both private and public entities, making it complicated to plan for.

- Group 2 also inquired about the status of the Army Corps' Harbor and Tributaries study. Group 2 recognized a need to plan for coastal flood protection while minimizing the effect of such on the health of our waterways.

Group 3

Group 3 discussed water quality and natural resources, ferries, and public access. Participants discussed the roles of advocacy groups, local communities, and city agencies in advocating on these issues, as well as the best way to equitably and strategically invest in city and community goals. Some key highlights included:

- In Wakefield, we have BX river alliance and BX river advocacy. Should there be more focus on advocacy groups/ organization elsewhere, or should we be counting in DCP to advocate on these issues/interests/public access?
- With increased use of the surrounding waterways, participants highlighted the need to improve water quality and cleanliness, both from City efforts and through community engagement
- Participants favored the recent NYC Ferry expansion to Soundview, raised the possibility of future service to Co-op City and City Island, inter-Borough service between Bronx and Queens, and leveraging benefits to City Island's boat yards and businesses.
- Expanding public waterfront access around City Island and to Pelham Bay were also raised, including the importance of balancing approaches to public and private shorelines.

Group 4

Group 4 discussed water quality and natural resources, ferries, and public access. Related to public access, participants focused on the need for balance community concerns of safety, maintenance, and law enforcement with the desire to provide additional waterfront access. The group also discussed how larger waterfront spaces, such as Orchard Beach and Pelham Bay could be capitalized as resources for multiple communities by having better connectivity to those communities. The group also discussed the merits of thinking of ferry service as a comprehensive system- both in terms of having neighborhood ferry stops that connect neighborhoods to each other, as well as in terms of connecting the ferry with other transportation modes such as bike-sharing programs, shuttles and parking availability.

Other key highlights included:

- The need for better access to in and out of City Island; limited availability for public transit users
- There is a need for more public access. It is limited on City Island, and more programming and better maintenance is needed while making sure safety, trash collection and law enforcement concerns are addressed.
- Oysters, red mussels and seaweed as forms to improve water quality, coastal protection
- Highlighting the need to think about all these issues in a holistic and integrated way
- Ferry to City Island: could increase visitors to island, provide alternative mode of transportation, allow for diversification of businesses in the island, help reduce vehicular traffic into/on of City Island