



## DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes

### Queens: Northern Queens

September 17, 2020

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **Queens: Northern Queens**. There were approximately 35 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 group 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 their top highlights from each breakout room.

### Breakout Discussion Highlights:

#### Group 1

Group 1 primarily focused on ferries and public access. Participants were generally supportive of ferry service as a mode of transportation, particularly during COVID-19, but they discussed several important caveats and considerations. They noted there should be a strong public engagement process as it pertains to siting new ferry stops, considerations for making the ferry affordable for underserved communities, and other siting considerations like parking and connectivity to other modes of transit. Participants also discussed the design, maintenance, and programming of waterfront public spaces. Participants emphasized the need to have mechanisms in place to maintain older public access sites, especially those that were developed prior to current waterfront zoning regulations.

Key highlights included:

- There are important equity considerations related to the location of ferry stops, ticket costs, and transferability between NYC ferry and other forms of public transit. Lack of transferability between NYC Ferry and the MTA makes the ferry unaffordable for many New Yorkers.
- Participants favored a Bronx-Queens ferry route to directly connect outer borough communities rather than connecting stops through Manhattan
- Regarding programming of parks and waterfront public spaces, it can be difficult to do innovative things (ex: build marine stairs or other in-water structures to assist with in-water access) because of liability issues. Incorporating more user-friendly amenities, like restroom facilities and kayak storage, would increase appeal to a greater number of people.
- In addition to maintenance considerations for waterfront public spaces, we also need to design them for resiliency. This includes considerations for sea level rise and storm surge; we should design to live with water.

## Group 2

Group 2 discussed public access, water quality and natural resources. Participants highlighted the need to prioritize getting near, in and on to the water as a key public access goal. There should be a new attitude towards water- one that is less about risks and challenges and more about the opportunities it provides. Water quality is key in this aspect- identifying those areas where water quality has improved and prioritizing them for access, as well as changing our relationship to water, and how swimming is a key component in that effort. The group focused on stewardship and the need to balance access to resources in underserved communities, highlighting that outer borough residents might have more work commitments/work multiple jobs and therefore less ability to volunteer or participate in local stewardship opportunities. Finally, participants asked about how the City will prioritize projects in the economic landscape post-COVID, and ways in which we can identify projects that achieve multiple goals to adapt to the new financial situation.

### Key highlights included:

- Facilitate more opportunities to get onto or into the water, particularly swimming.
- Consider a new approach to waterfront signage that outlines things to consider before entering the water as opposed to prohibiting access to the water.
- Signage and wayfinding were highlighted as important aspects of identifying accessible waterfronts, and encouraging people to visit these spaces.
- In an effort to combine public access and water quality, prioritize public access based on the safest waterways, and places where the City has already made great progress on water quality, as well as areas that are not near CSO outfalls.
- It is important to promote stewardship, specifically including creativity and variety on the waterfront through continued community involvement, and allowing for communities to take ownership of spaces without over-regulating or designing these spaces.