

DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes**Southern Queens****October 15, 2020**

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **Southern Queens**. There were more than 60 attendees at this meeting.

The workshop kicked off with a presentation by Michael Marrella, Director of Waterfront and Open Space Planning, 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 on 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 discussed a range of topics, including economic activity, resiliency & climate change, water quality & natural resources, and ferries. On economic activity, participants spoke about unmet potential for tourism and eco-tourism in southern Queens, citing the New Jersey Shore as an example. In terms of new development, participants advocated for eco-friendly and flood resilient designs that preserve natural resources and are not located in low-lying areas. Participants spoke about deteriorating bulkheads and some of the complex permitting challenges associated with replacing them. There was also a discussion on 'sunny day' high-tide flooding, and the need for comprehensive, funded plans to reduce risk in low-lying neighborhoods in all 5 boroughs. Participants noted that economic development should be balanced with concerns about ecology and water quality. Finally, regarding ferries, the group discussed ways to encourage business opportunities near ferry landings, and the general advantage of ferries as a way to connect places like the Rockaways that are relatively isolated from other modes of mass transportation.

Additional highlights included:

- The need to strike a balance between development and open space, especially in light of COVID-19.
- We should consider community resources that will be required for new development – hospital access, schools, parking, etc.
- Solutions for coastal flooding are sometimes not the right solutions for other types of flooding (high tide or inland).
- We should consider how upland activities can negatively affect water quality in Jamaica Bay and other local waterbodies.

Group 2

Group 2 addressed a number of topics including, coastal flooding and resiliency, public access, ferries, and economic activity. On coastal flooding and resiliency, participants noted coastal project projects

that are currently in design or under construction on the Rockaway peninsula. The participants noted that these projects are long overdue and urged the various levels of government working on them to complete them as soon as possible. The importance of flood-resistant buildings being able to withstand coastal storms was also discussed but participants urged caution about allowing new development in low-lying areas. Group 2 also established a connection between waterfront public access and economic activity. The group cited Rockaway Beach as an untapped resource for driving economic activity through tourism that could benefit the entire Rockaway peninsula. Participants also stressed the importance of opening up the bayside of the peninsula to waterfront public access and in-water recreation. One participant noted that NYC Parks' reconstruction of Bayswater Park will provide amenities for launching kayaks and paddleboards, but flagged on-going issues with mosquitoes as a deterrent to the public's enjoyment of the waterfront. Finally, on ferries, Group 2 expressed enthusiasm for the Rockaway ferry and interest in additional ferry service to the eastern portion of the peninsula and JFK Airport. However, participants cautioned that the wake generated by ferries may play a role in shoreline erosion.

Group 3

Participants in Group 3 focused primarily on the topics of public access and resilience and climate change. On public access, participants noted that Rockaway Beach offers a range of desirable amenities and is an economic engine for the city. Conversely, much of Jamaica Bay is not accessible or inviting to the public- it is an often overlooked resource. Building stronger physical connections to the Bay and creating educational programming through engaging schools and youth groups could be one way of resolving. That said, we must consider the balance between ecology and access in waterfront spaces. On resiliency, the group spoke about flood mapping efforts and potential discrepancies in different flood maps and their various uses for information sharing and planning purposes. Participants discussed a need to think carefully about building in the floodplain, citing the Rockaways in particular, and use of different tools that could manage high risk areas, as well as coordination on funding needed to protect coastal areas from storms and sea level rise. Additional highlights included:

- Highlighting a lack of parking and limited amenities (concessions, restrooms, portage for kayaking/paddleboarding, etc) for activating the Bay side of the Rockaways
- Need to increase awareness and educational outreach to get people in the water and doing healthy activities such as swimming, paddling, kayaking; more than just looking at the water.
- Considering how the CWP could connect to long term efforts to improve water quality being led by DEC and DEP.

Group 4

Group 4 focused on resiliency, public access and water quality. Participants highlighted the need to infuse the resiliency and climate change goals with a sense of urgency, as well as be specific of where these strategies/projects would happen and how the city would prioritize working with low income communities and communities of color that have additional vulnerabilities in the floodplain. Land use came up as a discussion item, and many participants focused on the rationale behind development in the floodplain, with some participants calling

for a moratorium on development while coastal protection projects are defined and implemented, and others focused on withdrawal or other mechanisms to completely stop development or shift it to a different area. In terms of public access, participants focused on the need for people to have access to their nearest waterfront, stating that being near the water has a high risk, but it should also have high benefits. Edgemere landfill was discussed as a potential place for community access. In terms of water quality, and governance in general, participants discussed the lack of coordination across government levels, and the multitude of jurisdictions in and around Jamaica Bay and the Rockaways. This often results in lack of accountability and maintenance.

Other key highlights included:

- NYC has a lack of berthing places for historic ships, which means we miss out on educational opportunities; need berthing spaces in locations that are easily accessible to public
- The city needs to have better emergency evacuation/protocols in place
- It can be difficult to track where sewage or garbage is coming from as well as what jurisdiction is responsible, making water quality improvements difficult.