

DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes**Staten Island: North-West Shore****September 29, 2020**

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on Staten Island: North-West Shore. There were more than 40 attendees at this meeting.

The workshop kicked off with a presentation by Michael Marrella, Director of Waterfront and Open Space Planning 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 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

Conversation in Group 1 focused primarily on resilience and climate change as a top priority. Participants felt that we should first deal with some of the existential threats of climate change, and that improving public access, water quality, and supporting the working waterfront should all be considered with a “resiliency lens” in mind. The importance of wetlands and other natural buffers in reducing storm surge and absorb stormwater was also discussed. Some participants thought that we should do more to protect wetlands and other permeable areas, and prevent development from disrupting large ecosystems. Other mentioned that we should develop different resiliency strategies/shoreline protection solutions for different types of waterfronts, and that we cannot protect residential communities the same we protect working waterfront areas, for example. The importance of being able to go in/on the water, especially for students [in Staten Island] to fully appreciate that we live on an island, was also discussed. Other highlights included:

- It’s important to have utilities like electricity on public piers so that they can easily host public events and festivals.
- Within goal 2 of resiliency and climate change, we should consider mapping natural resources such as wetlands that may not be protected under current regulations.
- Others mentioned that we should also consider (potentially within goal 4), how communities utilize open spaces such as parks and other vacant land and try to map this.
- We should consider adding a goal related to education, and the importance of a ‘waterfront curriculum’ in NYC public schools that helps connect students to the waterfront, and foster a greater waterfront identity for NYC.
- A similar version for adults could help communities have more nuanced discussions about the challenges and opportunities of improving the waterfront in NYC.

Group 2

Group 2 discussed a range of topics, including water quality, the working waterfront, public access, and resiliency. Participants emphasized the importance of preserving and enhancing the working waterfront and DCP agreed, noting that our port is the 2nd largest in the country and vital to our economy and providing us with the goods that we use. Offshore wind was also noted by multiple participants as a major opportunity, particularly with respect to creating good paying jobs. The group discussed resiliency in depth, including considerations for building in the floodplain and the impact of sea level rise on issues like stormwater treatment and combined sewer overflow. On public access, participants called for improved/increase in-water access (for boating, kayaking, swimming, etc.) and DCP agreed, highlighting outreach related to our identify as a waterfront city as well as the inclusion of public access goals in the framework for the plan. Additional key highlights included:

- It's crucial to highlight the goals for the working waterfront, especially in light of high unemployment rates. Offshore wind has great potential to be an economic engine.
- Education around harbor traffic for recreational boaters is very important on Staten Island.
- There are opportunities for maritime-related education and certifications in public schools to establish pathways to employment early on.

Group 3

Group 3 focused on public access, water quality and natural resources, and resiliency. Participants discussed various ways in which public access and water quality were connected, and the importance of elevating opportunities to get to and into the water. Citywide water-focused education programs were mentioned as a way to include natural science, swimming instruction, water quality awareness, and a better understanding of being island dwellers. There was focus on making Staten Island's waterfront more accessible and inclusive to diverse communities, and ways in which these opportunities could be augmented. Participants also mentioned the need to find ways in which waterfront development- when focused on economic development- could go back into supporting existing communities. Participants discussed multiple environmental issues specific to Staten Island, and called for a deeper dive into better understanding these issues and addressing them through the plan. Participants also focused on wetlands and green infrastructure, and how crucial their preservation and maintenance is to flood resiliency. Additional key highlights included:

- Would like to expand kayak access and opportunities for swimming
- Non-contiguous ownership of waterfront parcels – public and private – is a challenge; zoning could help create continuity
- Development and public access need to be considered as equity issues with a focus on supporting the community
- City needs to listen to frontline communities about water quality concerns and observations
- The North Shore needs more resources to support community organizations and increase diversity of waterfront users