

DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes**Queens: East River****November 10, 2020**

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on Queens: East River. There were more than 45 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 discussed a range of topics, especially focusing on resiliency and climate change, public access, and water quality. Some participants advocated for alternatives to vehicular transportation to reduce carbon emissions and runoff of pollutants into local waterways. The group talked about greenways along the waterfront, the need for more green infrastructure and permeable surfaces, and the ecological and flood resiliency benefits of living shorelines. Participants talked about ways to ensure that new waterfront development goes “above and beyond” sustainability requirements. They also noted that there are many NYCHA developments along NYC’s waterfront and stressed the importance of including NYCHA residents in conversations about the waterfront. Many participants expressed a preference that only water-dependent uses should be located at the waterfront. On water quality, the group discussed the need to reduce Combined Sewer Overflow (CSOs) and improve the availability of education and resources for property owners and the public in order to promote more green infrastructure. Additional key highlights include:

- Enjoyment of waterfront public space can be impeded by a lack of access to water and bathrooms and other amenities – these things become doubly important in light of climate change and rising temperatures.
- Goals in the Plan should inform each other – mapping and data collection should happen before making decisions.

Group 2

Participants in Group 2 kicked off a discussion about public access and stewardship. Participants spoke about the role that developers have in providing public access to the waterfront, and talked about strategies to ensure that robust community engagement happens early in the planning process for new developments to address challenges down the road. Participants underscored the uniqueness of

different communities and the need to build flexibility into the design and programming of waterfront public spaces to reflect these communities. Participants encouraged DCP to study and work with different stewardship groups to identify best practices. Participants noted that the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan should promote equitable access to the waterfront and all it has to offer. The concept of equity should be embedded into all of the Plan's goals, reinforcing the Beacons at every step of the process. The Plan should also be explicit about what it means by equity, for whom, and how different strategies will promote it. Similarly, the Plan should emphasize education and awareness on the climate emergency, water quality, and stewardship of the waterfront. The group also spoke about water quality and natural resources, with some participants favoring the idea of a 'wild waterfront' not enhanced by public access or the built environment. The group emphasized that the goals around water quality and natural resources need to be clear and specific about what will be achieved in the next Plan.

- One participant urged DCP to think holistically about coastal flood resiliency, noting that resiliency touches all aspects of the city's waterfront.
- Another participant encouraged DCP to start thinking about the opportunities for public access that large utility sites could provide, even if such opportunities are outside of the timeframe of the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. They noted that the large utility sites in western Queens and other parts of the city may not be needed if the city transitions to renewable energies.
- Participants suggested emphasizing the 'protect' element of the goal 'Protect and enhance the natural waterfront'.

Group 3

Group 3 focused on public access, resiliency, and the working waterfront. On public access, participants highlighted challenges associated with maintenance and operations of waterfront public spaces. They noted that some spaces have different kinds of long-term maintenance needs that must be accounted for from the project's conception. The group was supportive of in-water recreation and having more infrastructure and amenities like boat houses and boat storage to support it. They also discussed stewardship and the need to raise the profile existing groups and resources. On the working waterfront, the group talked briefly about ferries and the connectivity to working waterfront or formerly industrial areas, and discussed the importance of preserving these areas for working waterfront use. On resiliency, participants emphasized the need for long-term approaches (thinking ahead to 2100 rather than 2050, for example) when making decisions about developing the waterfront, particularly in areas where tidal flooding is likely to occur in the future. Additional highlights included:

- People are less likely to use the waterfront if it lacks critical amenities such as bathrooms and drinking fountains that make them accessible and enjoyable to more people
- An education campaign on what exists on the waterfront would help raise awareness and advance efforts (coastline, connection, birds, ecology, history, etc.)
- The Plan should consider "resiliency" in a broad enough context to include climate change, ecology, and communities.