

DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes**Brooklyn: NY Harbor****September 30, 2020**

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning's (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **Brooklyn: NY Harbor**. There were approximately 100 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 the major takeaways from each breakout room.

Breakout Discussion Highlights:Group 1

The conversation primarily focused on the working waterfront and economic activity. However, participants also discussed the ways that resiliency and public access relate to these initiatives. There was a strong focus on preserving historical buildings and maritime infrastructure to support the preservation and expansion of the working waterfront. In the case of new development, there was a strong interest in working with developers to design resilient and functional buildings along the waterfront that effectively utilize the ground floor and do not preclude maritime uses. Participants were also interested in developing requirements for warehouse distribution centers along the waterfront to utilize the water for transporting of goods.

Key highlights included:

- There was interest in encouraging more freight to be moved by barges rather than trucks to divert traffic and support local maritime activity.
- DCP staff explained that Comprehensive Waterfront Plan is not a regulatory or binding document, but it has “the power of good ideas”, which can help inform other policy tools, such as the NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP). The WRP was discussed as an important policy tool that can help guide appropriate waterfront development and support maritime industry through its policy assessments and special area designations, such as the Significant Maritime and Industrial Area (SMIAs).
- The opportunity for the CWP to delve into “governance” along the waterfront was also discussed; the primary goal is to improve coordination of permitting, design and construction along the waterfront, especially as it relates to maritime uses.
- Participants were interested in reevaluating uses allowed in M1 districts and zoning along the waterfront, to ensure that a full range of “21st century manufacturing” processes are permitted.

Group 2

Group 2 focused on public access, the working waterfront, and resilience and climate change. Mechanisms for increasing public involvement in waterfront developments were discussed. NYC Parks has a public input process when designing new parks, which factors heavily into final design, for example. Participants were also interested in mechanisms that encourage developers to provide in-water access, even if it cannot be mandated. Similarly, there is an interest in connecting green/open spaces along the waterfront, and encouraging developers to consider connectivity between spaces when providing public access on their sites. There was also a discussion on how rezoning efforts are separate from the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (CWP). CWP is a citywide document that establishes broad goals for the city's waterfront and strategies for achieving them. The next CWP will highlight projects that can address multiple goals for the waterfront. Participants were also interested in utilizing our waterways for the transportation of goods, as a more sustainable alternative to trucking.

Key highlights included:

- Waterfront access plans can spell out connections between sites along the waterfront. In addition, several greenway plans have advanced to connect upland areas to the waterfront, but not necessarily along the waterfront spaces. Sometimes industrial and utility infrastructure on waterfront can make this connectivity along the waterfront difficult.
- Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency text amendment is happening this fall and will allow more flexibility for resilient building construction and retrofits and makes permanent some emergency zoning changes that were implemented post-Sandy. The CWP would look beyond this zoning text and build on it.
- We should consider creating a financing mechanism to help support resiliency investments (infrastructure, elevating homes).

Group 3

Group 3 focused on public access, the working waterfront, and water quality and natural resources. Participants were interested in looking at land that is city owned and thinking about ways it could be made more accessible to the public. Some examples were cited such as 28th Street in Sunset Park and street ends along the Gowanus Canal. The importance of being more explicit about what 'access' means (recreational access or otherwise) was also discussed. The group emphasized the importance of utilizing the city's waterways for moving freight and regional linkages as an alternative to trucks, and opportunities for locating maritime uses along Brooklyn's industrial waterfront. Participants were also interested in having "non net combined sewer overflow (CSO)" as part of new development as a more explicit goal. Similarly, there is interest in understanding the impact of increased density on CSOs and water quality.

Key highlights included:

- Zoning recommendations should be more specific to workforce development and industrial development on the waterfront to ensure private rezoning requests are more aligned with these goals.

- Waterfront access points should be more visible and safer, with clearer wayfinding, particularly in industrial areas.
- Fencing and rails can be impediments to safely get out of the water if someone is in the water or falls into the water, we should remove the number of barriers along the waterway.

Group 4

Group 4 focused on public access, the working waterfront, and resiliency. Participants discussed the importance of a robust public education program on water issues and resiliency for all ages. The discussion in this group also centered around land use and zoning. In relation to the working waterfront, participants discussed how current zoning might not align with policy plans such as the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan or the Waterfront Revitalization Program. Similarly, they discussed that the use groups allowed in manufacturing districts under zoning are too varied and risk losing maritime or water-related industries on or near the waterfront. On the flip side, participants also suggested that the definition of working waterfront be broadened to be more inclusive of other water-borne or water-related industries that would benefit from being near the water, as well as make sure that we are moving away from fossil fuel and these new industries bring green and local jobs. When discussing public access, participants focused on the need to have budgetary commitments from the City for ongoing maintenance as well as make sure that the City is not giving too much in the name of development or affordable housing and receiving too little in terms of public access along the waterfront. Overall, participants were eager to discuss cross-cutting and overlapping issues, focusing on processes and mechanisms for implementation of the plan, as well as accountability.

Key highlights included:

- Some participants were concerned with the extent of city subsidies that are provided to NYC Ferry, as well as equity issues related to who it may serve or exclude.
- Giving access to the waterfront for residential development may compromise the waterfront's ability to be active and job generating
- To catalyze and grow the working waterfront we need to understand the nuanced challenges of today's waterfront (rising rents, encroachment of housing and commercial uses, etc.).
- If we're to expand marine transportation, there needs to be investment in green energy to accommodate for that growth.
- There should be a goal about interagency collaboration and coordination to align methodologies and priorities.

Group 5

Group 5 focused on public access, the working waterfront, and resiliency and climate change. Participants were interested in developing guidelines for working waterfront areas that would incentivize utilizing waterborne transportation over trucking. The importance of wayfinding and signage for public access areas and the need for these spaces to feel inclusive and open were also discussed. Participants discussed the need for more accessibility as well as softer shorelines, highlighting the need to balance between hard and soft edges. When discussing additional issues in terms of public access, participants focused on the types of activities, amenities, and programming that could happen along the

waterfront to make it more inviting and inclusive for all ages. Participants discussed how the working waterfront seems to develop piecemeal, with little coordination between public and private interests. Some participants highlighted that it was hard to distinguish what was meant by ‘working waterfront’ and how this theme related to all other waterfront issues.

Key highlights included:

- Participants suggested the need to analyze successful public access spaces and think about how these findings can be applied to future projects. One participant mentioned that Bush Terminal Park feels like an escape and that the space is utilized well.
- Participants highlighted the importance of having ‘destinations’ at the waterfront, such as museums or pop-up events, as well as amenities such as restroom and shade facilities.
- There was focus on how to encourage industries to utilize the waterfront when locating their businesses on or near the waterfront.
- Some participants mentioned the difference between public access policies –and the long list of guidelines for these spaces- in comparison with working waterfront and the lack of guidelines or incentives to utilize the waterfront.
- Participants discussed the wide variety of industrial uses allowed in the waterfront, which is not always compatible or conducive to water-related industries, and encourages other industrial uses.