

## Workshop Summary Notes

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **Manhattan: Lower and West**. 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 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 participants primarily discussed resiliency and climate change as well as public access. On resiliency, the group focused on the need to invest in resilient coastal infrastructure. Attendees expressed the urgency of financing and implementing coastal protection projects for neighborhoods at risk of sea level rise and coastal storms. The group spoke in detail about lessons learned from the East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) project. Many participants thought that the public should be more aware of opportunities to participate in shaping plans and weighing in early on project design. On public access, there was interest in expanding opportunities to get close to and into the water in lower Manhattan. Additional highlights included:

- We are in a position where we critically need to invest in resilient infrastructure, but we should also see this as an opportunity to do things better.
- There may be opportunities to remove parking and other non-water dependent uses along the waterfront in order to create more public access spaces.

#### Group 2

Group 2 participants primarily focused on resiliency and climate change, water quality and natural resources and public access. On access, some participants were interested in establishing continuous greenways that connect all waterfront areas within Manhattan and exploring ways to reserve the space needed for these greenways at or near the waterfront.

There was also interest in salt marshes and the roll they play in mitigating and are effected by sea level rise and climate change. One participant noted the presence of salt marshes in areas of the city like Jamaica Bay and the importance of giving marshes the space to migrate upland. This is a challenge in New York City due to the presence of roads and other structures. However, there are opportunities to create “migration pathways” that open up spaces for marshes to move upland. This also led to questions of equity, and how to provide spaces for wetlands to migrate, without displacing the residents who live near them.

Additional highlights included:

- Educational signage should be added around the waterfront, from historical signage to upland signage for guiding people to the waterfront. Course work could also be developed for students around coastal flood risk, water quality, and marine life.
- It can be difficult to dock a boat in New York City due to the presence of vertical bulkheads. The City should increase the number of public docks and identify solutions for shoreline design that enable docking. Access should consider connections from the water in addition to connections on the land side.
- There needs to be improved coordination and cooperation between city, state, and federal agencies on a number of waterfront topics, including coastal flood resiliency and the design and maintenance public open space.

### Group 3

Group 3 participants focused on resilience and climate change, public access, and economic activity. Many participants were interested in ensuring that coastal resiliency is built into the design of parks and public access areas. Participants acknowledged that each community faces different risks and has different needs and suggested that communication strategies to communities be tailored to these conditions and issues. Participants highlighted the missed opportunity for students and other local youth to be engaged in waterfront-related educational activities and trained as stewards of waterfront sites and other open spaces, especially during these times where most children are spending too much time indoors. The group discussed the idea of building community through important waterfront amenities such as boathouses and restroom facilities, as well as highlighted the lack of amenities –and the inequity of design standards- in current waterfront spaces such as West Harlem Piers. Participants also suggested that NYC has a great asset – the New York Harbor and all its waterways- and the City should find ways to improve access and provide the type of outdoor experiences that many residents seek outside of the city.

Additional highlights included:



**NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan – Public Workshop**

**Manhattan | Lower + West**

November 12, 2020

4 PM – 5:30 PM

Virtual – Zoom

- When designing public access spaces, it's important to create a destination, provide adequate amenities and consider how someone accesses the waterfront and where they can go from there.
- Participants urged the City to rethink the marine transfer station in West Harlem- a place that could support green energy, commercial activity, and utilize the waterfront for transportation of goods.
- Participants acknowledged that although moving things by water can be more efficient, the maritime industry is very conservative and needs to compete/update to better technologies and greener energy sources.