

DCP Waterfront Public Workshop Notes

The Bronx: Hudson River, Harlem River, Hunts Point Peninsula and Bronx River

October 1, 2020

As part of the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) **NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Public Workshops**, DCP hosted a meeting focused on **the Bronx: Hudson River, Harlem river, Hunts Point Peninsula and Bronx River**. There were more than 60 attendees at this meeting.

The workshop kicked off with a presentation by Brendan Pillar, Deputy 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 the highlights from each breakout room.

Breakout Discussion Highlights:

Group 1

Group 1 focused discussion on public access, resiliency, and ferries. Participants noted that the western Bronx has very limited public access to the waterfront, especially compared to other boroughs. In regards to stewardship, participants suggested that the plan should work to elevate the voices of nonprofit stewards already doing important work in the Bronx. Additionally, the City should work to develop better connections from the waterfront to nearby upland communities, including signage and wayfinding. On resiliency, the group discussed the need for environmental justice to be the foundation of any resiliency efforts, including dignified wages and good paying jobs for waterfront communities. The group also discussed ferries (NYC Ferry in particular), with participants citing equity issues in terms of populations served by the ferry, and one participant suggesting ferry subsidies should be diverted to other forms of mass transit. Additional highlights included:

- Public access is an environmental justice issue
- A participant cited Peaker Plants (supply energy when demand is highest in the city) in Hunts Point as a critical environmental justice issue; should be looking at Renewable Rikers proposals
- There should be better coordination between public agencies on issues like connectivity and wayfinding to the waterfront

Group 2

Group 2 discussed a range of topics, including public access, resiliency, and ferries. Participants spoke about the interconnectivity between public access and water quality, noting that where public access is limited, the area is less likely to be clean and less likely to be cared for. There should be more opportunities for in-water access, including swimming and rowing, which in addition to exercise, could opening up opportunities for scholarships. Other participants noted that increasing heat waves may lead more people to swim. As a result, there should be more signage, educational material, and other measures to promote in-water safety. Several participants noted cross-benefits of access to the water including, educational, recreational, and cultural. On resiliency, participants called for protection for vulnerable communities on the waterfront, highlighting the need for clearer communication about

climate risks and consideration of a more expansive set of environmental issues during planning decisions. The group also discussed ferries, with participants noting a need for more intra- and inter-borough connections (ex: the Bronx and Queens). Additional highlights included:

- water and access is important for cultural reasons; need to understand how and why people use the water/waterfront to ensure it's clean and safe
- Need to consider environmental implications of ferries and ferry stops

Group 3

Breakout room 3 discussed several topics, including resiliency, public access, and economic opportunity. Participants spoke about environmental health/justice issues in the Bronx, including high prevalence of asthma and the need to green the south Bronx. The group discussed the importance of working with and elevating the needs of Bronx residents to help them succeed and benefit from waterfront development. Participants called for traditionally marginalized communities to be prioritized first to remedy environmental justice issues. The group also spoke about waterfront education and public access, in particular preserving the natural waterfront as well as promoting safe access to and from the waterfront in industrial areas. Housing and displacement was also discussed, with participants highlighting a critical need for affordable housing and jobs in the Bronx that support rather than displace local businesses and residents. Additional highlights included:

- Important to emphasize opportunities for mitigating negative public health outcomes, whether supporting natural waterfronts where they can be restored, or promoting public access and open space
- Continuity is important along the waterfront; ensuring a cohesive vision, improving connections to the waterfront, and bringing groups together, rather than as a piecemeal approach
- On resiliency, we should do more to study permitting challenges and promote soft shorelines (ex: Harlem River)

Group 4

Group 4 discussed public access, water quality and natural resources, resiliency and climate change and ferries. Participants focused on the importance of awareness and education. Participants mentioned that there was little access to the waterfront in the Bronx, despite the borough being surrounded by water. There was an emphasis on having people know more about their proximity to water, as well as understanding their role and impact on their local environment. This theme cut across all the topics that were discussed in terms of: having more opportunities to make the waterfront more equitable, having better signage and wayfinding, as well as educational content along the waterfront, having better design and construction standards for resiliency and understanding the importance of having a ferry stop nearby. Participants also mentioned multi-modal transportation, and the lack of opportunities to bike around the Bronx waterfront in comparison with other boroughs. Some participants also mentioned the missed opportunities of providing public access in new industrial waterfront developments and suggested various policy or incentive-based mechanisms that would do so. Participants also focused on accountability, citing over 30 years of advocacy in the Bronx for the South Bronx Greenway with no results. Additional key highlights include:

- Public access can change perspectives/treatment of bodies of water through more daily uses



**NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan – Public Workshop
Bronx | Hudson River, Harlem River, Hunts Point Peninsula and Bronx River**

October 1st, 2020

4 PM – 5:30 PM

Virtual – Zoom

- Need for more public easements to waterfront public access- especially from commercial/residential/manufacturing entities
- Tibbets Brook Day-lighting project; more commitments/investments in natural infrastructure/solutions to improve water quality and other associated environmental and social impacts
- Build stronger relationships with Community Based Organizations and other stakeholders and key influencers in the Bronx; build partnerships that are more on the ground/local to advocate/educate/promote events, ideas, projects= more visibility