



**We want to thank everyone who participated in one- or many- of our virtual public workshops this fall!**



This fall, the DCP team hosted 12 virtual public workshops to discuss the preliminary issues and goals within the [framework](#) for NYC's next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. The framework, released in September 2020, includes a set of draft goals for the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan organized by themes such as [Public Access](#), the [Working Waterfront](#), and [Resiliency and Climate Change](#).

Each of our virtual public workshops focused on a different geography of NYC, but topics and discussions often spanned across the city and its waterways. Over 1,000 people registered for the virtual workshops from all five boroughs, and we are very grateful to everyone who joined. We also [launched a website](#) in September to provide an opportunity for New Yorkers to submit feedback on the framework online. We received over 100 responses through the website.

We are writing to share what we heard through these workshops and online comments submitted, as well as to provide more information about ways you can continue to participate in shaping the Plan. DCP will use this feedback to

refine the goals and shape the strategies that will be included in the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan.

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As you may know, the Plan was scheduled to be released at the end of 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused DCP to move its public workshops from March to the fall of 2020, and adjust the meetings to a remote format. As such, our entire schedule has been pushed back roughly six months. **DCP will release the plan by the end of June 2021.** We are incredibly grateful to the thousands of New Yorkers who shared their voices with us, especially during these uncharted times. We look forward to continuing these conversations in the new year. Please stay tuned for more information on next steps and opportunities to participate.

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## Workshop Highlights

Workshop participants discussed a wide range of issues, from wetlands restoration to supporting the working waterfront, and everything in-between. The following is a summary of these conversations organized by themes. This summary cannot possibly capture the breadth and depth of each discussion, so if you're curious about what was discussed at each workshop, please [click here](#) for more detailed notes.

## Overall Comments

Across the workshops, participants expressed interest and enthusiasm for a next Plan. People brought a range of exciting ideas to share, underlining the incredible dedication and passion that New Yorkers have for their waterfront. Participants want the Plan to reflect their expanding aspirations for what the waterfront can offer. They noted that the Plan is an **opportunity to articulate a new, ambitious vision for NYC's waterfront**, but that more work is needed to identify the overarching vision. The Plan should have a clear vision so that it is taken up enthusiastically by the public and future mayoral administrations.

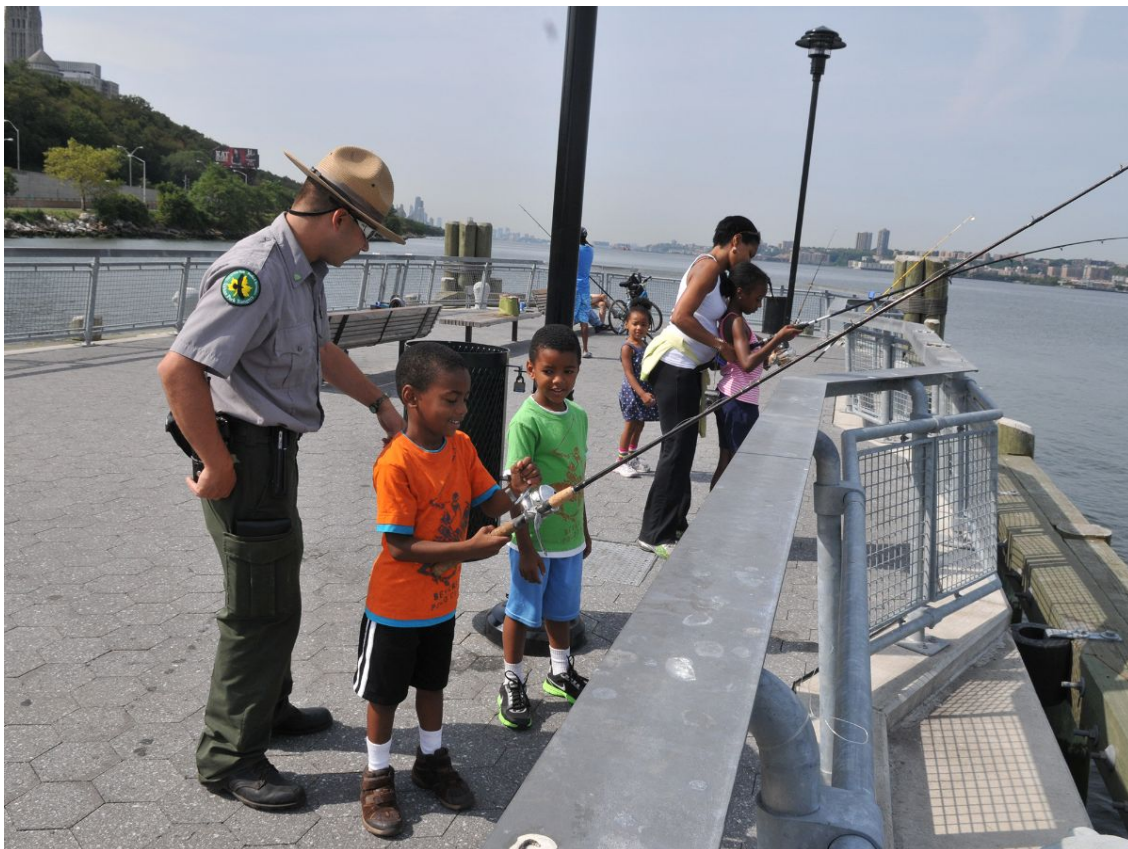
Participants liked the idea of having three beacons (resiliency, equity, and health) to provide direction for the Plan. Participants want to see the **three beacons carried throughout the Plan and planning process**. They suggested that the Plan should be explicit about what definitions are being used for terms like resiliency and equity since they have different meanings to different people.

Another common point of discussion was about the process for implementing the Plan. Workshop participants remarked that it is easy to articulate goals like “Protect and enhance the natural waterfront”, but the Plan needs to explain what this involves and how it will work. Participants often noted that waterfront governance is complicated, and it can be unclear which agencies are responsible for implementing and managing various projects and initiatives. Participants also want to engage in the Plan’s implementation and hope that the Plan will provide clarity about how different agencies coordinate with each other toward common goals.

A common thread in many discussions was the need to increase education and awareness about critical topics, including climate adaptation, ecology, public access, water quality, and water safety. This underpinned a general sentiment that we need to broaden the coalition of waterfront enthusiasts in New York to include communities that have been historically under represented in planning processes.

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## Public Access



### *Emphasize Equitable Access to the waterfront*

Public Access was one of the most common themes that workshop participants chose to discuss. Participants nearly universally advocated for more public

access to the waterfront across the city and especially in areas that are currently underserved. Participants often spoke about the health benefits of having access to the water, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many conversations framed public access as an environmental justice issue with participants calling for public access to be prioritized in historically marginalized communities.

***Foster a better relationship to the water through educational programming and increased awareness***

Swimming was frequently brought up in conversation. Participants spoke of an increased interest in swimming in the harbor and identified a need for educational programs to promote safe swimming practices.

***Connect the waterfront to upland communities and increase its visibility***

Signage and wayfinding were frequently brought up in conversation. Workshop participants said that the waterfront can often feel disconnected from adjacent communities, and suggested improving signage and wayfinding to help connect New Yorkers to their waterfront. They also suggested a need for better communication for alerting New Yorkers to issues including water quality advisories, areas of historical significance, and education about the natural waterfront, to promote safety and awareness of our waterways.

***Provide more amenities at the waterfront***

Workshop participants were excited about an increasingly wide range of amenities and activities for NYC's waterfront and waterways and hope the Plan will promote new opportunities to get close to and into the water. Many New Yorkers who joined the workshops were proponents of human-powered boating. They spoke about the need for more access points to launch small boats such as kayaks or canoes as well as the need for facilities including boat storage and restrooms to support these activities.

***Recognize that public access may not be appropriate in all locations***

Some participants noted that while they agree with promoting public access generally, there are locations where it may not be appropriate such as active working waterfront sites and Forever Wild areas intended to preserve and protect ecologically sensitive spaces.

***Increase funding and coordination for stewardship and maintenance***

Many discussions about public access focused on stewardship and maintenance. The maintenance of waterfront public spaces can be highly variable and many participants cited issues ranging from overflowing trash cans to dilapidated infrastructure. Workshop participants identified a need for more maintenance funding and other strategies for sustaining existing public access areas. On stewardship, participants noted that there are already a number of

great organizations working across the city to improve the waterfront, but that more needs to be done to recognize and replicate the work of these organizations.

## **Water Quality and Natural Resources**



### ***Improve water quality with green and grey infrastructure solutions***

Workshop participants often acknowledged improvements to water quality over the past decade, and were very enthusiastic about recent wildlife sightings in the harbor. Participants also expressed a strong desire for the City to sustain its commitment to reducing Combined Sewer Overflow (CSOs) and other forms of pollution. Participants connected water quality to a range of other issues such as recreation and environmental justice, and many advocated for a holistic approach to improving water quality with green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions.

### ***Identify policies to improve governance of the natural waterfront and promote best practices***

Several conversations revolved around the governance of the natural waterfront. Workshop participants highlighted the need to protect and restore wetlands and expressed concern about the impact of development. They wanted to know more about what policies are currently in place to prevent wetlands loss, how they can be strengthened, and how coordination between

involved agencies could be improved. Participants often advocated for more green infrastructure like rain gardens and living shorelines. Many conversations highlighted the benefits of mussels and oysters too.

***Promote stewardship and access to the water to encourage New Yorkers care about water quality***

Participants were interested in improving the perception of how clean New York's waterbodies are for certain activities, noting that poor perception can affect the public's interest in advocating for things like recreation, stewardship, and restoration.

## **The Working Waterfront**

Conversations about NYC's working waterfront generally focused on the need to preserve and support the working waterfront, raise public awareness about its importance to the city's economy, expand into green energy, and connect New Yorkers to the good paying jobs it offers.



***Advocate for the maritime industry and articulate a clear vision for the future***

Workshop participants expressed their support for NYC's maritime industry and talked about ways to preserve areas of the working waterfront that they perceive to be under threat of disappearing. Conversations often highlighted the importance and complexity of governance, with some participants calling for better a better alignment of land use, infrastructure, and policy decisions

among public agencies. They hoped to see a clearly articulated vision for the future of the working waterfront, including investments in resilient infrastructure and a shift to moving more freight by barges rather than trucks. Questions about governance also focused on the challenges of the permitting processes.

***Invest in the green economy and include historically excluded communities to the jobs it provides***

Discussion frequently centered on green energy and the growing potential of offshore wind development. Participants spoke about the importance of green technologies such as shore power to reduce the environmental health burden on adjacent environmental justice communities. They were supportive of offshore wind and want to ensure that NYC is prepared to take full advantage of the New York State positions itself to be a national leader in clean energy. Participants identified a need for workforce development programs to connect New Yorkers to jobs on the working waterfront, particularly for adjacent communities and those with limited educational attainment. Participants often highlighted the importance of economic development and workforce development in light of recent high unemployment rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants agreed that the working waterfront is a critical economic engine for the city and region.

## **Economic Activity**



***Promote an equitable economic recovery on the waterfront***

Conversations about economic activity on the waterfront took on a new sense of importance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and recent high rates of unemployment. Participants spoke about the overlap between the waterfront and economic activity, especially relating to green energy and jobs. Some participants noted that emerging opportunities like offshore wind are likely to have secondary benefits as this sector matures. Whatever the specific opportunity, workshop participants emphasized a need for economic activity to benefit all New Yorkers, especially communities living near the waterfront.

### ***Leverage investment in the waterfront and work to simplify governance***

Workshop participants talked about ways to promote economic activity on underutilized areas of the waterfront. For example, some conversations focused on the potential for commercial development on existing piers and boardwalks as a means for spurring economic activity. Participants noted that when it comes to something like piers, the cost of repairing infrastructure and the complexity of governance (mixtures of private and public ownership at different levels) can impede economic development opportunities.

### ***Support new opportunities for economic activity such as eco-tourism***

Some participants noted that whales and other marine life are returning to NYC's harbor. They suggested that this may create opportunities for eco-tourism such as whale watching, and that it could raise awareness about improvements in water quality and the natural waterfront.

## **Ferries**





***Support the expansion of ferry services where feasible, especially for underserved communities***

Workshop participants expressed general support for ferries, focusing on the recent launch and expansion of NYC Ferry. Some participants favored taking ferries during the COVID-19 pandemic as an alternative to other forms of mass transit. Many participants had questions about specific ferry routes and the possibility of expanding service to neighborhoods that are currently not served by NYC Ferry. Some suggested more direct connections between the outer boroughs, rather than connecting through Manhattan.

***Address concerns about conflicts on the waterways and ensure the benefits of ferries reach everyone***

Conversely, some participants raised issues about the potential ecological impact of ferry landings as well as the impact of ferry wakes on human-powered boats like kayaks and canoes as well as on the shoreline. Advocates of human-powered boating spoke about the potential for conflict on increasingly crowded waterways and identified a need for more safety education for recreational activities. Some participants also noted that NYC Ferry is heavily subsidized, suggesting this will need to be rectified in some way if the ferry is going to continue in the future. Related, participants cited studies indicating that ferry riders are disproportionately wealthy and white, highlighting the need for equity in terms of the communities served by ferry systems.

## **Resilience and Climate Change**



### ***Act urgently on climate change***

Resilience and climate change were often at the forefront of discussions at the virtual workshops. Workshop participants wanted to know what NYC's plan is to adapt to climate change, sometimes expressing frustration at the pace of planning and investment to protect the city from sea level rise, coastal storms, and other climate-related threats. Equity was also a frequent theme of discussion. Many participants spoke about climate justice and the need to center BIPOC communities in all resiliency and adaptation efforts.

### ***Improve public engagement, focus on better understanding/acknowledging inherent risks and trade-offs***

Some participants expressed a desire for better public engagement on the design and implementation of coastal protection projects. Other participants discussed the types of coastal protection projects that they would like to see along their shorelines. There is a strong perception that only lower Manhattan has seen investment in coastal protection infrastructure. This often led to discussions about the role of federal funding and the need to clarify where else coastal projects are moving forward and how projects are financed.


### ***Develop a resilient land use framework and justify decision-making / Have a holistic vision for climate adaptation and resiliency***

In terms of land use, workshop participants questioned how to guide development in the floodplain, commenting that there needs to be a policy about where development is appropriate and where it is not. Additionally, participants focused on the need for the City to have a holistic vision around climate adaptation that is cross-cutting with other issues, such as natural resources, stormwater management, and flood protection.

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## **Next Steps and timeline update**

Thank you to everyone who participated in our virtual public workshops or submitted comments online on the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan's Framework. This feedback will be used to refine the Plan's goals and begin to shape the strategies that will allow us to achieve a collective long-term vision for the city's waterfront. We will send another update in the new year with more information on our next steps for continued engagement.





NYC Department of City Planning Comprehensive Waterfront Plan Newsletter

Our mailing address is:

NYC Department of City Planning, 120 Broadway, 31st Floor, New York, NY 10271

Questions? Email us at [waterfrontplan@planning.nyc.gov](mailto:waterfrontplan@planning.nyc.gov)

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