

VISION 2020 NEW YORK CITY COMPREHENSIVE WATERFRONT PLAN

THE BLUE NETWORK PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Thursday, June 24, 2010, 6:30 pm
P.S. 234, 292 Greenwich Street, New York, NY

Vision 2020: The New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan is looking beyond the water's edge and into the water itself. While past planning has focused on the landside of the waterfront, Vision 2020 will consider the water bodies that surround the city as one of the central places of the city—physically, economically, culturally, and environmentally. This “Blue Network” of bays, rivers, inlets, streams, and wetlands connect our ecology and offer a diversity of uses and activities that extend our experience of the city beyond the edges of the land.

The NYC Department of City Planning, in partnership with the NYC Economic Development Corporation, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, the NYC Office of Emergency Management and the Mayor's Office for Long-term Planning and Sustainability, is holding a public workshop on June 24th to discuss the Blue Network section of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. At this workshop, planners and policy experts will guide attendees in a discussion of how to enhance New York City's use of its water bodies for recreation, transportation and education, as well as how to advance the health and ecological functioning of the water, and how to improve the city's climate resilience. The purpose of the workshop is to acknowledge both synergies and potential conflicts between various stakeholders' goals for the Blue Network and to identify opportunities that balance competing priorities and advance mutual interests.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

The workshop will begin with a brief introduction and presentation of the issues and challenges associated with the Blue Network. Next, we will divide into three separate discussion groups. Like the water itself, all the issues facing the Blue Network are interconnected in complex ways, and none can be discussed in isolation. We've designed the break-out sessions around three central topics, and within each topic, individual issues and their relationship will be discussed. These discussion groups are:

DISCUSSION GROUP #1:

USE OF THE WATERWAYS

This session will explore the connections and conflicts between Waterborne Recreation, Water Quality and Hydrology, and Transportation. Each of these topics will be introduced by an expert in the field, followed by a facilitated discussion. The goal of the discussion is to determine how to achieve a balance among different users and to understand the relation between safe use of the waters and standards in water quality and navigability. Recreational uses include motorized and human-powered boating, swimming, and fishing, while transportation encompasses passenger transit, such as ferries, water taxis, commercial freight, and emergency access and evacuation planning. Possible topics of discussion include identifying areas of the city that could support recreational boating or water-related educational activities, how recreational boaters can share the harbors with commercial vessels, and how recreational opportunities can be targeted to areas where water quality can best support them.

DISCUSSION GROUP #2:

URBAN ECOLOGY

This group will discuss strategies to achieve a healthier estuary in concert with economic and population growth. To set up the conversation, experts will present on the three issues of Wildlife Habitat and Ecology, Population Growth, and Waterfront Economic Development. We will discuss how to find “win-win” solutions for improving natural habitats, remediating brownfield sites, and encouraging residential, commercial, and industrial growth. The discussion will cover ideas for both the near and long-term, including but not limited to how to improve water quality while still supporting commercial and industrial harbor activity as well as continued population growth, designing infrastructure systems that advance ecological systems and provide wildlife habitat, repurposing vacant and underutilized industrial parcels, and considering upland drainage patterns to engage communities within a watershed to improve water quality.

DISCUSSION GROUP #3:

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The three priority issues that will guide this conversation are Sea Level Rise, Natural Areas and Habitat, and Waterfront Land Use and Infrastructure. The goal is to identify opportunities for New York City, a global urban center of over 8 million people, to increase its climate resilience. We will discuss future projections for sea level rise and storm frequency and intensity, the types of areas that are likely to be vulnerable in the future, and various adaptive strategies. Possible discussion areas include the potential for retrofitting existing homes and buildings, resilience landscape design for open spaces, and other potential preparations for more frequent coastal flooding.

Following this workshop, taking into consideration the input received from all seven public meetings as well as other comments submitted, the Department of City Planning, in concert with partner city agencies, will begin to formulate recommendations for the future policy and planning framework for the Blue Network. In the early fall, draft recommendations will be made public, with a public meeting held to solicit feedback.

If you are unable to attend this workshop, you can submit comments online at nyc.gov/waterfront or email us at waterfrontplan@planning.nyc.gov.