

Waterfront Management Advisory Board 2021 Annual Report



Prepared by the NYC Department of City Planning

Background

This report provides an overview of the Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB) and its meetings in 2021. The WMAB advises the City on matters related to the waterfront and waterways and guides the Department of City Planning (DCP) on the development of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. This Plan, published every 10 years, provides a vision for the city's waterfront for the next decade and beyond. DCP launched public engagement for the Plan in early 2019. The Plan was released on December 19, 2021. The full plan can be viewed at waterfrontplan.nyc.

The WMAB is convened according to the NYC Charter Chapter 56 § 1303. According to the Charter, the role of the WMAB is to consult with and, upon request of the mayor or any city agency, advise the mayor or such agency on any matter relating to the industrial, commercial, residential, recreational, or other use or development of wharves, waterfront property and waterfront infrastructure in the city. The Charter also establishes the parameters for appointing members to the WMAB.

The WMAB consists of nine members appointed by the mayor and nine members appointed by the speaker of the city council, provided that the mayor and the speaker each appoint at least one member from each borough. Appointed members include representatives of various organizations, industries and advocates interested in the industrial, commercial, residential, recreational, or other use or development of the waterfront. The WMAB is also comprised of representatives of DCP, the Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency (MOCR), the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

WMAB Meeting – February 22, 2021

DCP provided a brief update on its progress on the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (the Plan) at the beginning of the meeting, noting that during this time, DCP, along with its agency partners were working on the Plan's draft goals and strategies, which would be shared for public comment before the release of the final Plan. Much of the meeting was devoted to continuing the brainstorming process for the Plan vision statements. Because the previous meeting was largely spent exploring the issues and opportunities for each topic area, this meeting focused on conveying a new direction or ambition for each topic area. Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB) members were asked to share the first word or phrase that came to mind for each of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan's topic areas and then vote on the top key words for each. Top key words for each topic area are indicated below in **bold**, as well as overarching themes pulled from the brainstorming session.

Public Access

- A waterfront that delights
- Accessible
- Connected
- **Equitable access**
- Boating and fishing
- Universal access
- Driver of economic development
- Provide a moment to enjoy the views
- Visually accessible
- **Safe access**
- **User friendly**
- **A secure waterfront**
- Welcoming
- Resilient to flooding
- Reads as public
- Respect for private property
- Green
- Thoughtful consideration of surrounding context
- Not just one kind of access
- Get down
- Engaging the water
- Getting out of the water
- Allowing for emergency response

Water Quality and Natural Resources

- A living environment
- **Biodiversity**
- Swimmable – not just the beaches
- Living shorelines
- Habitat
- Healthy ecosystem
- Education
- Balance
- Public health benefits
- Addresses combined sewer overflow
- Green and gray infrastructure

- Pump out stations

Working Waterfront

- **Jobs**
- Construction
- Safety
- Deep water access
- Vulnerable to flooding too
- **Workforce development**
- NYC is the east coast's largest port
- Needs investment
- Limited funding for dredging
- Permitting challenges
- Requires regional coordination
- Permitting coordination/predictability
- Resilient
- Maintenance
- Use waterways to reduce roadway congestion/wear and tear on NYC's streets
- Support wind farms
- Needs an education strategy
- Public communication strategy to highlight role/importance of maritime industry
- NYC has an opportunity to lead the nation in the bluetech sector

Ferries

- **Multi-modal**
- **Connected** on the land side
- Key link for cut off areas of NYC
- Integrate transit systems
- Sustainable form of transit
- Needs to be accessible
- Needs to be equitable
- Electrification
- Multiple routes
- Supports transit resiliency/redundancy
- Nimble system
- Ready for change

- Potential to measure water quality
- Expansion

Climate Change and Adaptation

- Low carbon
- **Resilient neighborhoods**
- Intertidal habitat
- Coastal squeeze
- “Design edge for the norm not the storm”
- **Scalable strategies** for different communities and contexts
- Align state and city policies to encourage the development of living shorelines
- Focus on environmental justice communities
- All-encompassing/universal issue
- **Equity in adaptation**

Economic Opportunity

- **Green energy**
- Jobs
- **Land use and economic planning**
- NYC as base for offshore wind support services
- Need to plan ahead
- Needs a lot of space
- Housing/commercial development/mixed-use
- Building resiliently
- Green space/open space can drive economic opportunity
- Triple bottom line
- Job training
- Plan for the jobs of the future
- Food security
- Distribution done on the waterways

WMAB Meeting – June 8, 2021

The focus of the tenth Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB) meeting was the Department of City Planning (DCP)’s recently released *Draft Goals and Strategies* for the NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (the Plan). The meeting began with a brief presentation by Brendan Pillar, Deputy Director of DCP’s Waterfront and Open Space (WOS) Division, to provide

context and background on the process of developing the Plan, including timeline, phases of public outreach, the 2020 *Framework* document, and the *Draft Goals and Strategies*. After the presentation, the WMAB had an opportunity to share feedback on the *Draft Goals and Strategies*.

The *Draft Goals and Strategies* were discussed in order of its six topic areas: Climate Resiliency and Adaptation, Public Access, Economic Opportunity, Working Waterfront, Water Quality and Natural Resources, and Ferries. Afterwards, feedback regarding several topic areas was solicited.

Climate Resiliency and Adaptation

- Members suggested that DCP include more in the Plan on climate change mitigation strategies to reduce carbon emissions, such as advancing green energy deployment and increasing energy efficiency.
- Members discussed the role of resilient design guidelines. Some members suggested that guidelines should not become requirements, expressing concerns that resiliency requirements would potentially deter private investment. They suggested finding ways to measure the success of guidelines before requiring them. Other members recommended that the City create pathways to codify resilient design guidelines in order for them to become legislation and encourage higher building standards, adding that including more examples of innovative projects built to resilient design standards in the Plan could help shape policy and encourage innovation.
- Members inquired about the City's decision to use the 2050 New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) projections rather than 2100 projections for future flood risk.
- Members indicated a need for the Plan to address managed retreat.

DCP's response:

- In response to WMAB's question about the City's decision to use the NPCC's 2050 sea level rise projections, DCP clarified that the City uses the high-end estimate of 30" for the 2050s, making it very conservative. DCP elaborated, noting that the 2050 projections are used in zoning and land use planning in part because of the greater certainty and smaller ranges between the low- and high-end projections. The gap between the projections for the 2100s is much more substantial, reflecting less certainty. DCP added that the City looks towards both the near- and long-term projections when making decisions.

- In response to WMAB's suggestion for the Plan to cover managed retreat, DCP noted that the Plan will include the concept of housing mobility to support residents in improving their housing conditions through new or improved policies and programs that offer financial, technical, or counseling assistance. Housing mobility, DCP added, speaks to the necessity of residents being informed and empowered to make choices to improve their housing stability, including by having a variety of housing options over the long term to move out of harm's way as the climate changes.

Public Access

- Some members contended that areas of the working waterfront that utilize heavy machinery may be unsafe and/or inappropriate for public access. In response, other members offered that providing public access in suitable areas of the working waterfront can be done safely and with sensitivity to the operation of waterfront industrial sites. These members noted that doing so can expand access in waterfront communities that are currently underserved by open space, such as Hunts Point.
- Members suggested that the City provide more guidance regarding bike access along the waterfront and build out and/or improve the waterfront greenway network.
- Members discussed the importance of close coordination between partner agencies on expanding public access and the need for including local community groups in the processes and discussions regarding public space design and access to the water.

DCP's response:

- In response to comments on the safety of public access within the working waterfront, DCP noted that not all waterfront industrial areas are used for maritime industrial activities, adding that the draft strategies that are recommended in the document for maritime areas are different from those in non-maritime areas, to recognize the distinct uses and needs along NYC's industrial waterfront.

Economic Opportunity

- Members noted the importance of attracting offshore wind, renewable energy developers, and renewable energy jobs to NYC, highlighting the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. They discussed the City's role in facilitating this through investments in waterfront infrastructure.

- Members suggested adding more information about building the waterfront workforce of the future through youth education and partnerships with NYC’s public schools. Staff with NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) suggested highlighting NYCEDC’s work with the New York Harbor School to promote the educational programs that are already underway.
- NYCEDC staff also recommended highlighting the maritime sector’s potential to reduce traffic congestion and make NYC’s supply chain more resilient in the final Plan.

DCP’s response:

- In response to comments about educational initiatives and the maritime sector’s contribution to traffic reduction and resiliency, DCP noted that these topics are addressed in the Working Waterfront topic area in the *Draft Goals and Strategies*.

Working Waterfront

- Members suggested including more on potential renewable energy opportunities in the Plan, such as geothermal projects, tidal energy, and education efforts to attract young people to work in emerging renewable energy industries.
- Members also requested that the final Plan include more non-industrial economic opportunities that the waterfront offers, such as tourism.
- Members discussed the difficulty of accurately measuring the amount of cargo passing through the port and suggested that collecting more data would increase the accuracy of measurements and enable the NYC waterfront to access more federal funding to support the movement of goods.
- Members suggested that all economic projects should consider the triple bottom line of social, economic, and environmental costs, not just those advanced by City capital agencies.
- NYCEDC staff suggested adding a fourth “Working Waterfront” goal to advance programmatic, operational, and capital needs to promote marine and rail solutions and reduce our reliance on trucking while strengthening the city’s supply chain network.

Water Quality and Natural Resources

- Members highlighted the need for additional interventions to mitigate risks to water quality and natural resources due to climate change. Restored areas, including salt marshes, were highlighted by members for their vulnerability to sea level rise. Barriers to salt marsh migration, such as NYC's already built-out environment, were noted by these WMAB members as a key issue.
- Members recommended that the Plan include more information on in-water interventions, such as the potential to use clean dredged material in ecological restoration projects. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)'s reuse of dredged materials to support the restoration of Jamaica Bay's marsh islands was highlighted by members as an example of where this was done successfully.
- New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Staff noted that the "Water Quality and Natural Resources" topic area is an opportunity to think holistically about the connections between ecological health, the working waterfront, and climate resiliency.

Ferries

- Members suggested including a transition to clean, zero carbon, electric ferries as an eventual goal.
- Members discussed a need for increasing the reach of ferry services to lower income neighborhoods and a need to keep fares low to ensure equity.

Cross-Topic-Area Comments

- Members suggested including more information about education opportunities on the waterfront for New Yorkers, especially for students and young people.
- Members noted the challenges posed by the intersection of environmental justice and marsh migration as the climate changes and suggested that the Plan cover mapping and defining wetlands.
- Members suggested that the Plan highlight waterfront transportation, such as ferries and cargo ships, as a low carbon alternative mode of transportation and advocate for federal funding to support improvements to these systems.

- Members expressed interest in exploring ways to keep the Plan on the City’s list of priorities over the next 10 years. Members expressed interest in the Plan highlighting the role of governance in NYC’s waterfront and advancing the ideas within the Plan. Staff with NYC Small Business Services (SBS) added that it should be made clear which agencies will be responsible for implementing the Plan’s initiatives.

WMAB Meeting – December 15, 2021

The eleventh Waterfront Management Advisory Board (WMAB) meeting began with a presentation of the soon-to-be-released Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (the Plan) by Brendan Pillar, Deputy Director of DCP’s Waterfront and Open Space (WOS) Division. The presentation offered an overview of the Plan’s 10-year vision for NYC’s waterfront and highlighted key initiatives and projects in the Plan’s six topic areas: Climate Resiliency and Adaptation, Waterfront Public Access, Economic Opportunity, Water Quality and Natural Resources, Ferries, and Governance. After the presentation, the WOS team took questions and comments from the WMAB. WMAB members shared their feedback on the Plan and expressed support for continuing public engagement on it.

Climate Resiliency and Adaptation

WMAB members commended DCP for including Strategy 3.3 in the Plan. Strategy 3.3 supports the creation of housing mobility services including housing counseling, grants and low-interest loans, rental assistance, real estate brokerage services, estate planning, and moving assistance to serve both property owners and renters in flood-vulnerable areas. It also encourages affordable housing production and the production of a diversity of housing options citywide to enable housing mobility. At its previous meeting, the WMAB encouraged DCP to strengthen the emphasis on this topic.

One member also noted that the Plan, importantly, takes NYC’s short-term and long-term resiliency into consideration.

Economic Opportunity

Members noted the importance of maintaining and expanding deep-water access to support growing industries such as offshore wind while also balancing the need for docking space for intermediate size boats, which is limited and may be preventing NYC’s waterfront from realizing its potential as a tourism destination. One member stated that the tourism industry has room to grow on NYC’s waterfront and can provide NYC with many jobs.

Ferries

One member expressed concern about the potential for additional ferry services to increase water turbidity and impact the marine environment. In response, another member offered that these impacts have already been and will continue to be mitigated as much as possible.

Additionally, members highlighted their hopes that NYC's ferry fleet can continue to become more energy efficient. They cited San Francisco's hydrogen-powered ferries as something NYC could consider as it looks to improve the efficiency and sustainability of its ferry services.

Governance

Members were very pleased to see that DCP added the Governance topic area to the Plan. The WMAB recommended adding this topic area to DCP at a previous meeting.

One member suggested that the New York State Department of Transportation create a marine transportation division, noting that such an entity could help move cargo throughout the New York region in the most economical way possible.

Moving Forward: After the Plan's Release

Members asked about DCP's plans for post-release public outreach and expressed interest in continuing to be involved in the process and advocating for the ideas within the Plan.

After releasing the Plan, DCP explained that it will continue public outreach efforts to increase awareness of the Plan. Outreach efforts may include general presentations geared to a wider audience and more in-depth forums that focus on a particular topic area. DCP will provide the WMAB with an update on post-release outreach at its next meeting.

WMAB Member Biographies

Eric Johansson

Captain Johansson is a third generation Port of NY/NJ Captain and Distinguished Service Professor at Maritime College. He holds a Master of Science in International Transportation Management and is the innovative and forward-leaning founder of the annual SUNY Maritime College Towing Forum, now in its 19th year. Published funded research projects include: Hunts Point Terminal Market: The Demand for Waterborne Transportation as a Part of the Outbound Distribution System, Offshore Wind Development and Research, Economic Impact of Siltation on NYC's Small Waterways, Maritime Support Service Location Study (MSSLS), and Economic Analysis Brooklyn Navy Yard". In addition to his research, Captain Johansson serves on many local maritime committees such as Harbor Safety Committee, Energy Subcommittee, and Harbor School Professional Advisory Committee and National Maritime Committees.

Mychal Johnson

Mychal Johnson has a long-standing track record in community-based advocacy for environmental, economic, and social justice in the South Bronx. He is a co-founder of South Bronx Unite and a member of the Board of Directors of the Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the NYC Community Land Initiative, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, and the Watershed Advisory Committee of the Park's Department Harlem River Watershed and Natural Resources Management Plan and the Community Advisory Board of Columbia University's NIEHS Center for Environmental Health in Northern Manhattan. Mychal was also appointed as a civil society voting member of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Open Space Committee. He advocates for greater access to green space, truly affordable housing and quality of life enhancing efforts without gentrification in the South Bronx.

Jessica Katz

Jessica Katz is the Executive Director of the Citizens Housing Planning Council (CHPC). CHPC aims to develop and advance practical public policies to support the housing stock of the city by better understanding New York's most pressing housing and neighborhood needs. Prior to joining CHPC, Jessica served as the Associate Commissioner for New Construction from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). In that role, she oversaw the creation of thousands of units of affordable and special needs housing—serving everyone from the formerly homeless to middle income New Yorkers. She previously held a variety of roles at HPD, including as Assistant Commissioner of Special Needs Housing, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, and Assistant Commissioner for Preservation Finance.

Edward Kelly

Edward J. Kelly is the Executive Director of the Maritime Association of the Port of New York/ New Jersey and is responsible for managing the diverse activities of the Association and helping to develop the enhanced safety, security, ecological sustainability, and economic viability of the many maritime related industries in our Port. Ed has devoted many years as a Director of the New York Shipping Association, the Carriers Container Council, the USMX, and the Steamship

Operators Intermodal Committee. He has served on many joint labor / managements committees and trust funds. He is also currently serving as a member of NOAA's Hydrographic Services Review Panel. Ed also serves as an Industry Advisor to the Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce, and SUNY Maritime College. Ed completed his MBA studies at Pace University in New York City, and holds a certificate in Intermodal Transportation from the FDR Institute.

Aaron Koffman

Aaron is a Principal and heads Hudson's affordable housing arm totaling over 4,000 units – including the 4 largest solar PV systems on multi-family projects in New York State. Aaron is the project lead on several large affordable housing/ mixed-use new construction developments in the city including: the 992-unit La Central development in the South Bronx, the 740-unit Spofford Detention Center Redevelopment in Hunts Point and the 56-building affordable preservation portfolio in central Brooklyn. Aaron is a New York State Volunteer Firefighter who earned his Bachelor of Arts in Economics from UC Berkeley and his Master of City Planning from MIT. Aaron also serves on the Boards of the NYU Furman Center, Coro New York, and the Center for Urban Pedagogy.

Roland Lewis

Roland Lewis is the President and CEO of the Waterfront Alliance. A lifetime New Yorker, Roland has been at the helm of the Waterfront Alliance since its founding in 2007. Under his leadership, the Waterfront Alliance has organized a powerful constituency for a more resilient, accessible, and equitable New York Harbor. The organization has instituted programs, initiated and helped create a new waterfront plan for the City of New York, and become the leading waterfront policy organization in the New York region, known nationally and internationally. A graduate of Columbia University, he then went on to earn both a Master of City and Regional Planning and a Juris Doctor from Rutgers University. He served as co-chair of Housing First! and is on the board of the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York.

Pete Malinowski

Pete grew up farming oysters with his parents on the Fishers Island Oyster farm. After graduating from Vassar college, he began working at the New York Harbor School where he founded the Aquaculture and Oyster Restoration Programs. After 5 years as a public school teacher, Pete left Harbor school in 2014 to develop Billion Oyster Project where he is now Executive Director. Billion Oyster Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring oyster reefs to New York Harbor through public education initiatives. Based on Governors Island, it has grown into a region-wide initiative involving over 75 schools, 80 restaurants and thousands of community members working together to restore New York's once great oyster population. Pete also serves as a Co-Chair on the Governors Shellfish Restoration Council. Dr. Dr.

Dr. Geeta Mehta

Dr. Geeta Mehta is an adjunct professor of architecture and urban design at Columbia University. Geeta's research focuses on Social Capital and bringing to center stage its role in

enhancing neighborhoods, public health, education, skill empowerment, and resilience to climate change and other shocks. Geeta is the innovator of Social Capital Credits (SoCCs), a community currency for social good that is being used in USA, India, Ghana, Kenya through Asia Initiatives, an NGO she founded. Geeta is also the co-founder of “URBZ: User Generated Cities”, that works with underserved communities to help improve neighborhoods through advocacy and better public spaces and homes.

Michael Northrop

Michael Northrop is Program Director for the Sustainable Development grant-making program at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund where he focuses on climate change. Michael has been a Lecturer at Yale University’s Forestry and Environmental Studies School, Executive Director of Ashoka, an international development organization that supports “public sector entrepreneurs;” and an Analyst at First Boston, an investment bank in New York City. Michael serves on New York City’s Sustainability Advisory Board and on the boards of the Rainforest Action Network, Inside Climate News, and Princeton-in-Asia. Michael has an MPA and a BA from Princeton University.

Kate Orff

Kate Orff is the Founder of SCAPE, a landscape architecture and urban design firm based in Lower Manhattan. SCAPE’s work has focused on the ecological and social revitalization of urban water bodies and combining public space and new forms of participation. Kate is also an Associate Professor and Director of Columbia University GSAPP’s Urban Design Program. Kate was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2017, the first given in the field of Landscape Architecture. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Political and Social Thought from the University of Virginia with Distinction and earned a master’s in landscape architecture from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.

Debi Rose

Debi Rose serves as Deputy Majority Leader in the New York City Council, representing the North Shore of Staten Island. After her re-election in November 2017, Councilmember Rose was appointed Chair of its Committee on Youth Services and a member of the Council’s Committees on Aging, Education, Justice System and Transportation, as well as the Council’s Budget Negotiating Team. As former Chair of the Committee on Waterfronts, Council Member Rose sponsored legislation to reactivate the Waterfront Management Advisory Board to ensure that New York City is harnessing the full value of its immense waterfront. Councilmember Rose is a second-generation Staten Island native and the first African American from Staten Island elected to any public office. She also served on Staten Island’s Community Board 1 for 28 years and the Community School Board for 13 years.

Rafael Salamanca Jr.

Rafael Salamanca Jr. is the Councilmember for the 17th District of the New York City Council, representing the South Bronx. Beginning his career working in healthcare to expand access for low income and working families, Councilmember Salamanca then went on to serve as the District Manager for Bronx Community Board 2. He also previously served as the President of

the 41st Precinct Council, working closely with the NYPD and other local leaders to help improve public safety in the community. On the Council, Salamanca has fought for new, good-paying jobs by requiring that companies investing in the community hire local residents, including our youth. Councilmember Salamanca has fought to bring affordable housing to the South Bronx, focusing on ensuring residents of all incomes have access to new apartments.

Peggy Shepard

Peggy Shepard is co-founder and executive director of WE ACT For Environmental Justice and has a long history of organizing and engaging Northern Manhattan residents in community-based planning and campaigns to address environmental protection and environmental health policy locally and nationally. She has successfully combined grassroots organizing, environmental advocacy, and environmental health community-based participatory research to become a national leader in advancing environmental policy and the perspective of environmental justice in urban communities — to ensure that the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment extends to all. Her work has received broad recognition: The Jane Jacobs Medal from the Rockefeller Foundation for Lifetime Achievement, the 10th Annual Heinz Award For the Environment, the Dean's Distinguished Service Award from the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, and Honorary Doctorates from Smith College and Lawrence University.

Paul Sieswerda

Paul Sieswerda is the Executive Director of New York's Gotham Whale, an advocacy group that combines citizen activism and science by collecting research data throughout the area. Gotham Whale seeks to improve the health of New York's environment, for the betterment of humans and marine life. Growing up, Paul discovered his passion for marine life as a recreational SCUBA diver and spent much of his working life leading educational and research programs with aquariums. After retirement from that field, Paul founded Gotham Whale under the Staten Island Zoological Society and works on expanding his organization from year to year.

Kellie Terry

Kellie began her career at THE POINT CDC in 2002, a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the South Bronx through arts & culture, youth development and community development. In 2004, Kellie became Executive Director, overseeing organizational development, fundraising, arts based and environmental justice campaigns for the agency for over ten years. Kellie went on to join The Surdna Foundation as a Program Officer on The Sustainable Environments Team in 2015 where she currently works to support equity and sustainability efforts nationally. Kellie has completed the Executive Leadership Development Program with Columbia University's Institute for NonProfit Management, The We Are the Bronx Fellowship Program and has received recognition for her work from institutions such as El Diario la Prensa, New York City's largest and oldest Spanish-language daily newspaper. Kellie also served as The Board Chair of The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and is a Board member of The Bronx River Alliance and The Norcross Foundation. A proud mother of two, Kellie currently lives in the Bronx with her two sons, Ali and Naim.

Jay Valgora

Jay Valgora founded Manhattan-based STUDIO V Architecture, dedicated to the reinvention of the contemporary city. The Studio is focused on transforming and reconnecting edges, creating sustainable resilient communities, radical adaptive reuse of industrial and historic structures, and experiments in innovative fabrication. New York's waterfront provides the location of much of his most prominent work as STUDIO V has been reimagining NYC's waterfront including Astoria, Inwood, Long Island City, Flushing, DUMBO, Gravesend, Sunset Park, and Staten Island. Jay's award-winning design of Empires Stores exemplifies his philosophy: combining historic and contemporary design, overlapping uses, and private initiatives with public and cultural spaces. Jay has a Master of Architecture from Harvard University, a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell, and is a Fulbright Fellow.

Kelly Vilar

Kelly Vilar is the founder of the Staten Island Urban Center--a community development through community involvement organization focused on the betterment of urban neighborhoods of Staten Island. She is a former member of Staten Island's Community Board No. 1 and served as chair of the Youth Committee forwarding the first North Shore Youth Agenda. In 2015, Kelly formed the Let's Rebuild Cromwell Community Coalition and authored the proposal to develop a Maritime Education, Recreation & Cultural Corridor aka MERC for Staten Island's North Shore waterfront. Kelly is vice chair of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, a multidisciplinary center for global afro descendent culture integrating arts, education and activism. Kelly holds a Master's Degree in Urban Policy & Planning from the New School for Social Research and has extensive experience in youth and community development.

Henry Wan

Henry Wan is a builder/developer of affordable housing, construction manager, general contractor, property manager and real estate consultant, active in NYC since 1980. He has built and renovated over a thousand affordable housing dwelling units, both privately and under HPD and NYC Housing Partnership programs. He is a Registered Architect (NY), a member of American Institute of Architects and graduated from the University of Illinois with M. Arch. and B. A. Henry Wan is also a Founding Board Member of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in New York Inc., since 1991.

Dr. Judith Weis

Dr. Judith S. Weis is a Professor Emerita of Biological Sciences at Rutgers University, Newark. She received her BA degree from Cornell, and MS and PhD from NYU. She has published over 200 scientific papers, two technical books, and books for the general public about salt marshes, fishes, crabs, and marine pollution. She is interested in stresses in estuaries and salt marshes, and their effects on organisms, populations, and communities. She is interested in shorelines – natural, restored, hardened, and “living shorelines” and the services they provide, including biological diversity and resilience. Research includes effects of contaminants on behavior and ecology; marsh grasses as habitat; invasive marsh plants effects, mostly in NY/NJ. She serves on the editorial board for BioScience and is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She chairs the Science Advisory Board of NJ Dept. of Environmental

Protection, and co-chairs the Science & Technical Advisory Committee of the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program. In 2016, she received the Merit Award from the Society of Wetland Scientists.

About the Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning plans for the strategic growth and development of the City through ground-up planning with communities, the development of land use policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide, and its contribution to the preparation of the City’s 10-year Capital Strategy. DCP promotes housing production and affordability, fosters economic development and coordinated investments in infrastructure and services, and supports resilient, sustainable communities across the five boroughs for a more equitable New York City.