

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Workshop: Envisioning a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Waterfront

**FIDI-SEAPORT CLIMATE RESILIENCE MASTER PLAN | 3.23.2021**

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### INTRODUCTION

NYCEDC and MOR (the City) hosted a workshop on Envisioning a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Waterfront on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. This workshop drew urban design and transportation experts and advocates, along with members of the Climate Coalition of Lower Manhattan—a forum of individuals and groups who have expertise on Lower Manhattan’s complex context and are invested in the climate resilience of Lower Manhattan.

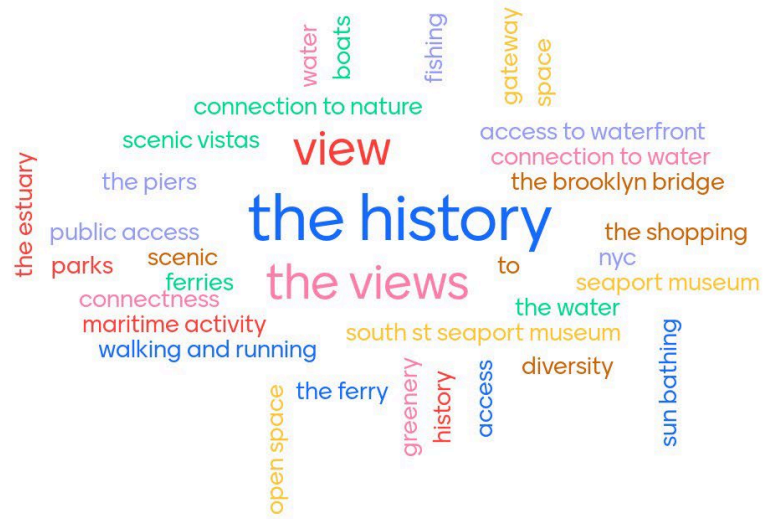
The City’s objectives for this meeting were that:

- Participants leave with an understanding of the overall project purpose and drivers, the transformational opportunities that accompany this kind of large-scale coastal resilience infrastructure project, and also understand the unique constraints of the project area
- Provide a forum for participants to express their priorities and vision for the future of Lower Manhattan’s public waterfront, to help inform project design
- Engage stakeholders, both new and old, and build relationships to foster active partners in this project

The City and the consultant team led the first half of the meeting, which consisted of opening remarks, project background, and a deep dive into transformational opportunities around open space, waterfront access, and transportation. The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) then led participants through an open discussion of their vision for this waterfront.

As a part of this workshop, participants were asked to submit answers to prompting questions, which populated to a word cloud. Those word clouds are posted below, along with a summary of the key takeaways from the discussion.

# What do you love about the Lower Manhattan waterfront?



# What transformational opportunities most resonate with you?



# What are the critical ingredients of a 21st century waterfront?



Please note that the FiDi Seaport Master Plan represents just one portion of the Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency strategy. If you want to learn more about the other projects that comprise this strategy, please visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/lmcr/index.page>.

## KEY THEMES FROM PARTICIPANTS

**Participants noted the importance of accessing the waterfront, and that equity and accessibility should be prioritized.**

Access and equity were prominent themes in our discussion. Participants noted the importance of a waterfront that is easily accessible by all; highlighting the importance of ADA accessibility, that it be welcoming and open to all, and that all New Yorkers can use it equally. They shared enthusiasm for the ways that this project presents an exciting opportunity to be innovative in how we think about designing a waterfront, and make sure that it is inviting to all of our neighbors.

Participants also expressed that it is critical that the waterfront is accessible to all. Design should consider the needs of all -- including older individuals, younger individuals, people with limited mobility, etc through thinking about factors such as resting places, shading, sloping, etc. This should be a space that is designed for all!

Participants also noted that accessing the waterfront is important, and a preference for coastal defense infrastructure options that allow for that access.

*Key words from word cloud: Equity, Access for all age groups, Shade, Access for all, Free public space for all*

### **Participants expressed enthusiasm for embracing the area's history and interest in leveraging that history for educational opportunities.**

This part of Lower Manhattan's waterfront is rich with history, and there is an exciting opportunity to highlight its history in how we design the waterfront. Focusing on the maritime history in this area – exploring historic moments like the Seaport's role in the Atlantic slave trade, George Washington's arrival at this dock, and the area's indigenous history, etc. could be highlighted as educational opportunities.

The Maritime Museum focuses on these ideas, and many schools use the museum as a resource – especially schools in the area. The FiDi-Seaport Climate Resilience Plan could provide an opportunity to enhance these educational resources and connect residents and visitors to the rich history of this area – building connections and community through shared knowledge of the area's history. Participants also noted that historic vessels could draw additional visitors.

*Key words from word cloud: Historic Vessels, Historical knowledge, Community and schools, Educational hub*

### **Participants noted their support for leveraging green technologies and sustainability.**

During conversations about mitigating the impacts of climate change, participants asked the City to consider issues of sustainability. Participants encouraged the City to look into more sustainable forms of transportation and ensure that piers have the necessary utilities to support electric-powered ferries.

*Key words from word cloud: Sustainability, Expanding ferry service, Protect ecology, Fresh air, Smart tech, Enhance nature*

### **Participants shared a desire to increase the quantity and quality of open space in the area and preserve beloved parts of the waterfront.**

Participants expressed a strong desire for more open space in this area. They noted that Fredrick Law Olmstead’s approach to landscape design could serve as a good example, as the parks he designed incorporate topography, grade change, and natural geographies well. Participants also expressed that they enjoy some of the existing open spaces in the area, like the beach beneath the Brooklyn Bridge, and that access to these spaces should be preserved and expanded.

*Key words from word cloud: Free public space for all, Make beach access permanent, Increase in open space, Touch the water, Green space, Get down to the water*

**Participants would like to see an overall reduction of roadway traffic, and are excited about the opportunity to reimagine the FDR Drive.**

Participants noted that car traffic is a big concern in this area, and that infrastructure such as the FDR Drive contributes to this traffic. Community members expressed a desire for bold thinking to reorient attitudes around automobiles. Representatives from Community Board 1 requested a traffic study to better understand how people are using these roadways. Participants also noted the high volume of commercial loading vehicles in this area and encouraged the City to look into this.

*Key words from word cloud: Reimagining the FDR, Less cars – more people, Take down FDR south of Brooklyn Bridge, Intermodal public transit*

**Participants urged the City to consider how the project’s construction may impact nearby neighborhoods.**

While participants acknowledge the importance of a large-scale infrastructure project to protect Lower Manhattan and enthusiasm about the prospect of taking down the FDR Drive, they noted that the project’s construction may negatively affect surrounding neighborhoods, such as air quality issues associated with dirt and debris. The participants urged the City to keep the neighborhood informed of potential construction impacts and asked the City to find ways to mitigate these impacts through the project’s design.

**Participants highlighted that community engagement remains critical.**

Participants noted that transparency around this project is important. They want to ensure that public is brought along and can be a partner with the City. They also noted how important it is to engage youth through this process, and they encouraged the project team to continue reaching out to local schools.