

THE NEW YORK CITY WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Proposed Revisions for Public Review
Pursuant to Section 197-a of the City Charter

BACKGROUND

New York City's Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP) is a regulatory review tool that guides agency reviews of projects proposed within the city's Coastal Zone to ensure that projects promote the economic, ecological, and recreational vitality of New York's waterfront. When a local, state or federal governmental discretionary action is required on a proposed project within the city's Coastal Zone, the project must be consistent with the policies and the intent of the WRP before it can move forward. Doing so helps to ensure that New York can derive the greatest benefit from waterfront development while minimizing conflicts. Examples of projects that would require WRP review include rezonings, disposition of city-owned land, pier or bulkhead construction, dredging projects, or the use of federal funding. Projects that don't require WRP review include those that require no discretionary action, such as building permits.

In its current form, updated in 2002, the WRP consists of 10 policy areas: (1) Residential and Commercial Redevelopment; (2) Maritime and Industrial Development; (3) Use of the Waterways; (4) Ecological Resources; (5) Water Quality; (6) Flooding and Erosion; (7) Hazardous Materials; (8) Public Access; (9) Visual Quality; and (10) Historic, Archeological and Cultural Resources.

WHY REVISE THE WRP?

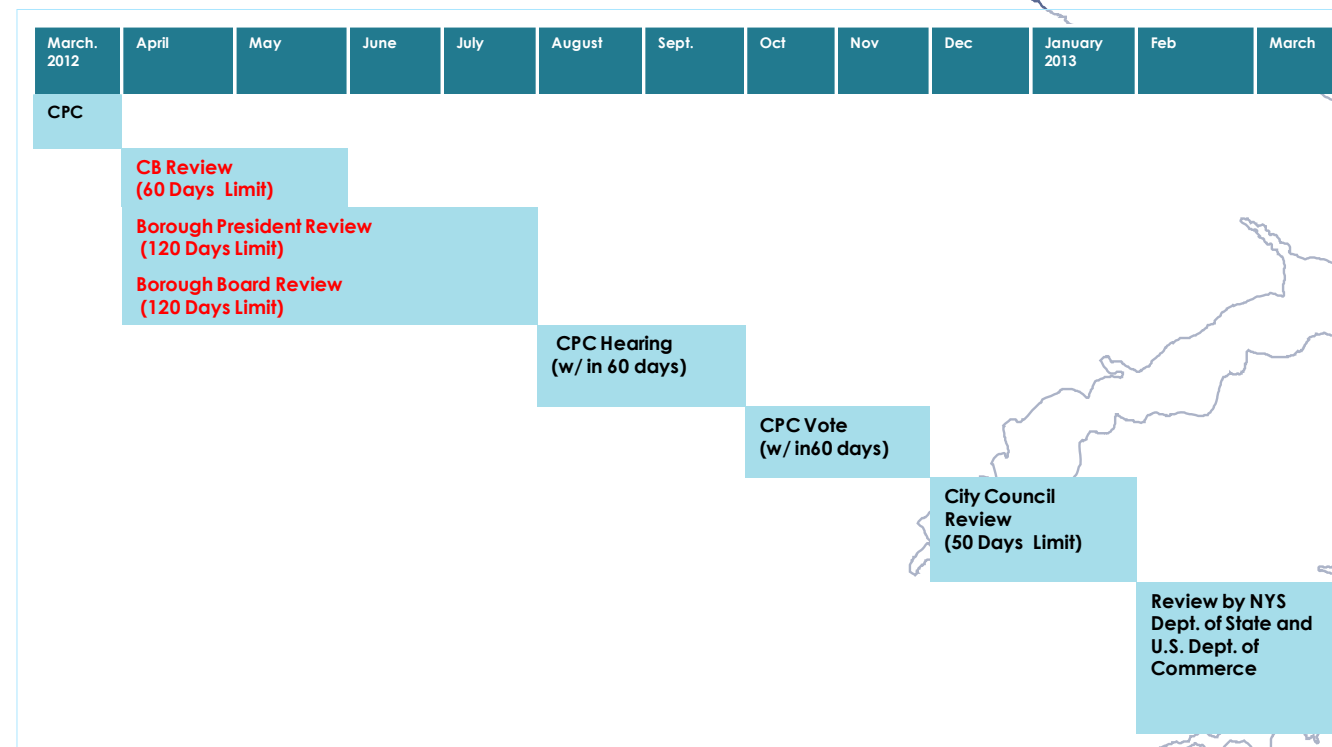
In early 2011, the Department of City Planning issued a new comprehensive waterfront plan, entitled Vision 2020, which lays out a ten-year blueprint for the future of the city's waterfront. Accordingly, the Department of City Planning is proposing a number of revisions to the WRP regulatory policies in order to advance the goals and priorities of Vision 2020. For instance, the new WRP will encourage the development of maritime industry while ensuring the protection of the environment, promote recreation both at the shoreline and in the water itself, provide design principles that consider the effects of climate change and sea level rise, and foster the preservation and restoration of ecologically significant sites.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR REVISING THE WRP?

The revised WRP goes through the "197-a" process for community input and adoption. This involves referral to every Community Board within the city's Coastal Zone, each Borough Board and each Borough President. The adoption requires review by the City Planning Commission, the City Council, and subsequent approval by NY State Dept. of State and the US Dept. of Commerce.

WHAT IS TIMELINE FOR REVISING THE WRP?

- March 26, 2012 – begin public review through 197-a process. Community Boards have 60 days (through 6/4/12) for review. Borough Boards and Borough Presidents have 120 days (through 7/31/12) for review.
- Early Fall 2012 – City Planning Commission review
- Fall/Winter 2012 – anticipated City Council review



HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

- For more info on the WRP: www.nyc.gov/wrp
- For more info on Vision 2020: www.nyc.gov/waterfront
- For questions: Jessica Fain
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WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED REVISIONS?

Among the most notable changes to the WRP are:

- Revisions to Part I (Program Description) to better describe the purpose, intent and structure of the WRP.
- Require projects to examine the risks associated with climate change based on sea level rise projections, and encourage applicants to take measures to minimize these risks through design strategies that will enhance their ability to withstand and quickly recover from weather related events. These measures may include such strategies as elevating or waterproofing the lowest floor of potentially vulnerable buildings and choosing salt-water tolerant plants for parks that may face temporary inundation in the event of a storm surge.
- To promote industrial development in concert with ecological preservation along the West Shore of Staten Island, create and map a new designation to be called the Ecologically Significant Maritime and Industrial Area (ESMIA). This area of Staten Island is uniquely positioned with vast wetlands and other natural features, and includes many large undeveloped parcels with close proximity to the Port, and access to highways and freight rail lines.
- Identify smaller sites of ecological significance throughout the five boroughs and promote their restoration by designating and mapping a new category to be called Recognized Ecological Complexes.
- In order to strengthen water-dependent industries and maritime support services, prioritize economically-viable maritime uses over other uses, and encourage maintenance and/or development of the bulkhead infrastructure for future maritime use.
- Promote in-water recreation by including in the WRP criteria for safe and suitable locations for human-powered boat launches.
- Create and map a new designation to be called the Priority Marine Activity Zone to promote the maintenance of necessary shoreline infrastructure for waterborne transportation such as piers for ferry landings. Priority Marine Activity Zones are located throughout the five boroughs and their designation would help streamline the permitting process for such infrastructure.
- Promote the designs of piers and bulkheads to accommodate a range of vessel types from kayaks to tug boats to historic tall ships.
- Require projects to examine the storage of materials that may pose public-health risks in the event of flooding or storm surge and promote best practices to ensure the safety of workers and residents of adjacent neighborhoods.
- Include design best practices in waterfront public spaces by requiring that projects be reviewed against design principles.
- Encourage all waterfront developments that are publicly funded or on publicly owned land to provide public waterfront access where safe and feasible.



The Governors Island Park Master Plan takes in sea level rise into consideration, elevating many sections of the park above the projected future flood plain.
Image courtesy of West 8 Team



Udall's Cove, Queens
Image courtesy of Mike Feller, DPR



Red Hook Boaters at Valentino Pier, Brooklyn



Open industrial uses on the waterfront include activities such as construction material storage



Interpretive signage at Erie Basin Park
Image courtesy of Russell Design