



GOAL 2

Enliven the waterfront with a range of attractive uses integrated with adjacent upland communities.

ENLIVEN THE WATERFRONT

By 2020 New York City's population is expected to reach 8.7 million, and by 2030 it will hit 9.1 million. People of all income levels will need places to live. They will need places to work and shop. And they will need places to gather with their neighbors. Development on the waterfront can help meet the housing demand for a growing population as well as provide jobs, generate tax revenue, and offer crucial services for New Yorkers.

Experience over the past two decades has shown that the waterfront is a tremendously attractive setting for residential development. Housing on the shoreline satisfies the deep human desire to be on the water and offers the chance to have bracing views of ships and shorebirds and glittering water. Waterfront development sites have proven so alluring that builders have gone to the extra expense of cleaning up contamination by past industry, building infrastructure, and providing public access and affordable housing.

Development on the shoreline can benefit not only those who live, work, and shop on the waterfront. By providing new publicly accessible areas for recreation and relaxation, waterfront development can serve upland areas, too. Opening up neighborhoods to the waterways—the city's largest contiguous open space—will make New York more livable and attractive, enhancing quality of life for everyone. Drawing people to the water will heighten awareness of the Blue Network and the historic sites on the city's shoreline.

Much of the waterfront, of course, is already occupied. Large portions of the waterfront are currently zoned for residential use; parks, airports, and Significant Maritime and Industrial

Areas take up other considerable stretches of shoreline (see Figure 1, page 37).

But vacant and underutilized land remains. In many cases, zoning or other land-use changes will be required before those areas can be developed. Contamination from past industry will need to be remediated in some places, and infrastructure built. But these challenges can be overcome. A shoreline enlivened with a range of productive, publicly accessible uses will help New York grow and prosper and become an even more exciting place than it is today.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Today the sites on the New York City waterfront that present opportunities for commercial, housing, or mixed-use development vary widely in size and potential. Some are historic structures that could be used for small-scale commercial, cultural, or educational uses—such as Pier A on the Battery in Lower Manhattan. Others are larger areas with several vacant sites that could provide mixed-income housing and community facilities in conjunction with open space—Sherman Creek in Northern Manhattan, for example. There are publicly owned sites, such as the one south of the 138th St. Bridge in the South Bronx, which could be redeveloped with residential or commercial uses, creating a new destination on the Harlem River. There are also privately owned sites with redevelopment potential, such as Anable Basin in West Queens, which could enhance recreational access to the water and provide housing. Sites for non-residential development near industrial areas could be developed with a mix of commercial and

light industrial uses, bringing new investment to neglected waterfront areas, such as the North Shore of Staten Island (for a complete inventory of current waterfront redevelopment sites, see Appendix C, starting on page 175).

An area that has undergone redevelopment in recent years but still presents opportunities is Greenpoint in Brooklyn. The 2005 *Greenpoint-Williamsburg Land Use and Waterfront Plan* opened up approximately two miles of waterfront for mixed-use and residential development, including affordable housing, and as many as 50 acres of open space. Development of the southern portion of the rezoned waterfront in Williamsburg is already near completion with Williamsburg Edge (1,200 units), Northside Piers (900 units), and 184 Kent (340 units). Waterfront sites in Greenpoint, such as Greenpoint Terminal Market, remain to be developed. These rezoned sites will provide for thousands of units of mixed-income housing, bringing new activity to this waterfront area and giving Greenpoint residents access to the East River and connections to new and expanded public space at Transmitter Park and Newtown Barge Park.

While waterfront development has proven remarkably robust in the past 18 years, sites come with specific challenges and considerations. These include the need to provide new infrastructure, to remediate contamination from past industrial use, and to preserve historic buildings and structures.

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

On some parts of New York's shoreline, water and sewer infrastructure may be needed to accommodate new development. The sewer system is already operating near capacity in some areas. While new residential or commercial development often reduces the rate of stormwater runoff from what were once paved industrial sites, such development can lead to increased flows of sanitary sewage. When this occurs in a combined sewer system, it reduces capacity for stormwater in that system, and if capacity is exceeded during wet weather, street

“The waterfront can be an important means of housing the million plus residents coming to New York by 2030. But in creating that housing, and the commercial activity that goes with it, we need to make sure that development benefits upland neighbors as well as those who live and work on the water.”

—Rob Pirani, Vice President for Environmental Programs, Regional Plan Association

REMIEDIATING CONTAMINATED SITES

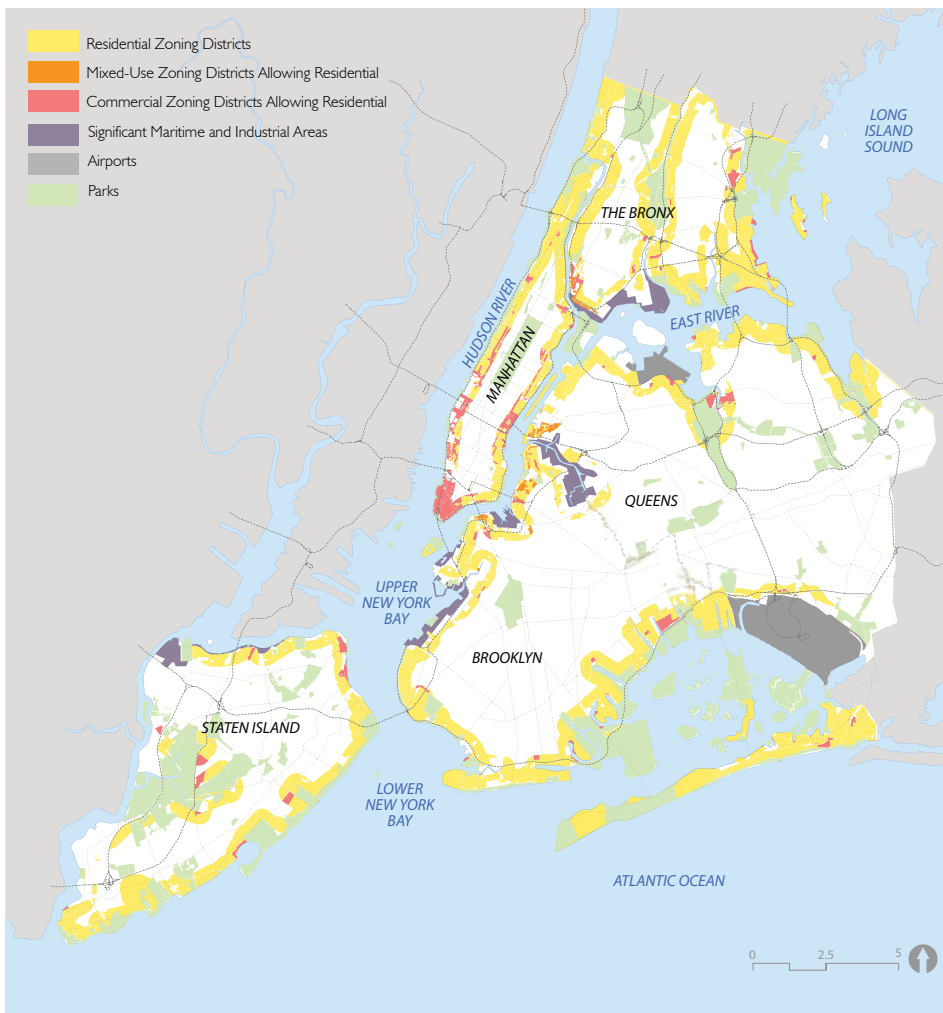


Figure 1: Shoreline Zoning (within 2,000 feet of the water). Residential zoning is dominant, but significant portions of the waterfront are also devoted to parks, airports, and industrial uses.

flooding, sewer back-ups, and the release of pollutants into surrounding waterbodies may occur.

The City continues to invest in expanding the capacity of the water supply and sewer systems, including in areas where new development is occurring. The Department of Environmental Protection recently enacted new procedural safeguards to ensure that development in growth areas can proceed only when sufficient sewer capacity is demonstrated.

In addition, in many areas performance of the combined sewer system can be improved through sustainable stormwater management strategies that help to regulate the flow of stormwater into the system. As described in *PlaNYC* and the *NYC Green Infrastructure Plan*, a network of source controls has the potential to significantly reduce pollution through incremental investments made over the next 20 years and

beyond. Promising best management practices include blue and green roofs to retain stormwater; underground water storage systems that allow infiltration and slow the release of stormwater to the sewer system, road alterations that let runoff soak into the ground, and rain barrels that store water in warm weather. Incorporating these and other stormwater-management techniques in new developments, as well as existing sites where feasible, can reduce flows into the sewer system. To help reduce stormwater runoff, the Department of City Planning recently expanded requirements for planting and permeable surfaces in waterfront developments, commercial parking lots, and front yards.

PlaNYC estimated that New York City has 7,600 acres of brownfields—vacant or underutilized sites where redevelopment is impeded due to the presence, or perceived presence, of contamination by hazardous materials.

In New York City, contaminants are commonly found on properties with a history of heavy industrial use. Since industry often located on the shore, many brownfields are on waterfront sites. Properties with a history of landfill—and much of the city’s current land area is actually landfill, built up over time from low-lying marshland, or created in the waterways—might be suspected of contamination.

Brownfields can remain underutilized or abandoned for years or decades, in part because of the significant potential for liability and financial risk for brownfield property owners and financiers. There is of course the substantial cost of site remediation and ensuring that the public or workers on the site are not exposed to contaminants and that contaminants are not released through site disturbance. Nevertheless, it is possible to surmount these obstacles when the value offered by new uses is sufficient to provide incentive for investment. With the city’s strong economy of recent decades, public and private real-estate investment, with government brownfield assistance, has yielded substantial cleanup and reinvestment.

City, state, and federal governments have developed numerous programs to encourage responsible brownfield cleanup and redevelopment. On the City level, all 11 major brownfield initiatives proposed in *PlaNYC* were enacted through the passage of Local Law 27 of 2009, known as the New York City Brownfield and Community Revitalization Act. One such initiative, the New York City Local Brownfield Cleanup Program (NYC BCP), is the first environmental remediation program in the nation to provide municipal oversight of brownfield cleanups. The Brownfield Incentive Grant (BIG) Program provides an easy and flexible way to reduce the cost of brownfield redevelopment through grants that assist property owners through the development process. The BIG Program offers funding for more than 100 environmental and land-development services, reducing the cost of brownfield cleanup and making redevelopment of brownfield sites more



The Greenpoint Terminal Market site on the Brooklyn waterfront.

competitive with development on clean sites. The Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation is currently developing a Green Property Certification Program to provide certification that a former brownfield site has been cleaned up. Certification will be awarded to properties that complete the NYC BCP or the equivalent program on the state level.

New York State's environmental remediation efforts include the Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP). This program, which is intended to enhance private-sector cleanup of brownfields, addresses contaminants including hazardous waste and petroleum and provides liability relief and tax credits for cleanup and redevelopment. A BCP Certificate of Completion provides liability protection and allows site redevelopment. The state's Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program helps municipalities and community-based organizations address local brownfields by providing assistance with land-use planning, site assessment, and environmental and economic analyses for strategic parcels. New York City is home to 17 BOAs, including 13 in waterfront communities.

UTILIZING HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Waterfront areas are home to many historic structures and archaeological sites connected to various threads of New York's history. Ward's Point, on the southern tip of Staten Island, was a base camp frequented by American Indians until the 18th century. In Lower Manhattan, the South Street Seaport Historic District commemorates the original port of New York City. Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island is a fortified battery from the 18th century. And the Brooklyn Clay Retort and Fire Brick Works in Red Hook dates from the mid-19th century and is one of the earliest manufacturing structures in the area.

Such sites promote an understanding of New York's history and provide a sense of identity and uniqueness of place. Protecting these resources safeguards the city's historical, aesthetic, and cultural heritage for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors. Preservation can also have economic benefits, improving property values and enhancing New York's attractiveness for tourism.

These historic assets need to be accounted for in redevelopment plans. There are a variety of ways to approach these waterfront resources, including historic designation, heritage tourism, and adaptive re-use.

Historic Designation

In New York City, historic preservation mechanisms include protection as New York City landmarks or listing on the state or national historic registers. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) is charged with identifying and designating the city's landmarks and historic districts, and regulating any changes to designated structures. There are nearly 500 New York City landmarks and about 30 historic districts on or near the waterfront. To be eligible for landmark designation, the building, property, or object must be at least 30 years old and possess special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or nation. The city's landmarks range from parks to bridges, dry docks to water towers. An historic district

is an area that represents at least one period or style of architecture typical of one or more aspects of the city's history, giving it a distinct sense of place. Landmark or historic district designation limits the ability of an owner to alter or demolish significant buildings, and subjects such buildings to an additional review by the LPC.

The New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP), which reviews all discretionary actions by city, state, or federal government entities within the city's coastal zone, takes into consideration protection of historic resources. Policy 10 of the WRP is "to protect, preserve, and enhance resources significant to the historical, archaeological, and cultural legacy of the New York City coastal area."

The state and national registers are the official lists of buildings, structures, districts, objects, and sites significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture of New York and the nation. Registered properties and properties determined eligible for the registers receive a measure of protection from the effects of projects that are sponsored, licensed, or assisted by the state or federal governments through a notice, review, and consultation process. Listing also makes properties eligible for federal and state tax credits for historic rehabilitation, but it does not place any restrictions on private owners of properties.

Heritage Tourism

Historic resources on or the near the water's edge can be protected, maintained, and promoted as heritage tourism sites, further enlivening New York's waterfront and showcasing its maritime past. Historic districts like Governors Island and the South Street Seaport not only celebrate the city's past, they also provide a venue for contemporary events and programs. These sites and events draw tourists as well as residents, bolstering the tourism industry.

Historic vessels are another way to promote understanding of New York's maritime heritage. Today historic ships throughout the city and neighboring areas offer educational programming and public events. Despite the success of these programs, they face many challenges such as permitting and insurance difficulties. In addition, historic ships have specific docking needs that are hard to meet.

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is another strategy to promote preservation of historic waterfront structures.

Many of these structures were built to accommodate uses or perform functions that are no longer relevant. Nineteenth-century industrial buildings, for example, are ill-suited to the needs of today's working waterfront. However, such historic resources can be adapted for contemporary uses with alterations that modify buildings while retaining their essential historic features or character. For example, at the Brooklyn Army Terminal—designed by Cass Gilbert, built in 1918, and now on the National Register—substantial but architecturally sensitive renovations have enabled the complex to house small-scale light manufacturers and back-office tenants as well as the new BioBAT bioscience development center.

Even where new uses differ dramatically from historic uses, the redevelopment of historic sites often presents a chance to display and interpret that site's history for the public. Along the waterfront, there are historic features or pieces of infrastructure that can be preserved and incorporated into the design of new spaces.

This has been done successfully throughout the city, such as at the Gantry Pier at IKEA Waterfront Plaza in Red Hook, Brooklyn, where cranes and piers were retained and industrial artifacts displayed in publicly accessible areas accompanied by commemorative plaques.



The Clipper City Tall Ship, just off Sunset Park. In the background: the 1918 Brooklyn Army Terminal.

Bernard Eite for the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

Enliven the Waterfront: Strategies and Projects

This plan envisions a waterfront in 2020 that is further enlivened through the redevelopment of waterfront sites with a range of attractive uses and high-quality public spaces. In addition to providing housing and jobs for people of diverse income levels, these developments will draw people from upland neighborhoods and beyond to the water's edge.

To realize this goal, the City will pursue the following set of strategies over the next

10 years. These strategies will continue efforts to promote the redevelopment of waterfront properties, where appropriate, while addressing the challenges these developments may face, such as infrastructure capacity, the presence of contaminants, and the need to preserve significant historic buildings and structures.

Vision 2020's 10-year strategies are complemented by the *New York City Waterfront Action Agenda*, a set of projects chosen for their ability

to catalyze investment in waterfront enhancement. The City commits to initiating these projects over the next three years and will be tracking progress on an ongoing basis. For each project, the lead agency and implementation year are noted.

Together, these strategies and projects lay out a comprehensive vision for the waterfront and waterways and a plan of action to achieve that vision.

1. Spur reinvestment in the waterfront.

VISION 2020 STRATEGIES

- Continue to identify opportunities for redevelopment for a range of uses to make productive use of waterfront land.
- Create a waterfront where the city's needs for new housing and jobs for people of diverse income levels are satisfied in attractive and safe surroundings.
- Consider locations appropriate for allowing a wider range of uses on certain properties to spur reinvestment in underutilized waterfront sites and infrastructure.
- Encourage the integration of water-dependent and water-enhancing uses within developments on the waterfront.
- Seek partnerships to examine the relationship between waterfront investment and upland economic impact. This research may include examining how small waterfront businesses such as vendors, recreational rental services, restaurants, and retailers spur reinvestment in upland and adjacent waterfront areas.
- Encourage a mix of uses, as appropriate, to activate public waterfront spaces, such as temporary programming (movie screenings, craft fairs, etc.) of publicly owned waterfront parking lots and other under-utilized sites during off-peak times.

ACTION AGENDA PROJECTS

- Catalyze more than \$150 million in public and private investment in waterfront development projects (listed on facing page).
- Conduct educational programming for children, including movie screenings and music, dance, and arts events on the waterfront throughout the five boroughs. (DCA, 2011)

2. Incentivize the cleanup and redevelopment of waterfront brownfield sites.

VISION 2020 STRATEGIES

- Work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and a range of stakeholders to minimize collateral effects of Superfund designation on investment in properties near Newtown Creek and the Gowanus Canal.
- Leverage redevelopment of brownfield sites through Brownfield Incentive Grants from the Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation (OER).
- Encourage property owners to attain NYC Green Property Certification, where appropriate, and enroll in the voluntary NYC and NYS brownfield cleanup programs. Continue to engage Brownfield Opportunity Area grantees.
- Increase the awareness of environmental cleanup resources and tools including OER programs.
- Work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to develop a model cleanup program for waterfront properties.
- Assess infrastructure needs of waterfront redevelopment sites.

ACTION AGENDA PROJECTS

- Revise zoning to encourage redevelopment and reuse of waterfront industrial sites by allowing greater flexibility to achieve certain goals, such as brownfield clean-up, adaptive reuse of outmoded buildings, expansion of maritime uses, and provision of in-water infrastructure. (DCP, 2013)

3. Increase knowledge of historic resources on the waterfront and promote preservation and adaptive reuse.

VISION 2020 STRATEGIES

- Conduct citywide study of potential historic resources on the waterfront to identify buildings and structures of historic significance.
- Establish new—and strengthen existing—policies to further protect historic resources and historic character along the waterfront.
- When redevelopment sites on the waterfront have significant historic features or conditions, encourage the commemoration, incorporation, or referencing of those historic elements.
- Prevent shoreline erosion in locations where it would jeopardize historic properties.
- Recognize historic vessels as important resources, worthy of consideration for their special needs. Attention should be paid to providing infrastructure such as water and electricity, protection from wakes caused by increased traffic on the harbor, and uniform policies for permitting and insurance to facilitate public programming for historic vessels.

ACTION AGENDA PROJECTS

- Seek partnerships and funding to conduct citywide study of historic resources on the waterfront. (DCP, 2013)
- Brooklyn Navy Yard: Open exhibition and visitors center. (BNYDC, 2011)
- Create uniform landing protocol and application for City-owned properties to facilitate docking of historic vessels. (Mayor's Office, 2012)

Waterfront Action Agenda Projects to Spur Reinvestment in the Waterfront

- Brooklyn Army Terminal, Brooklyn: Commence first phase of a commercial life sciences and technology center (BioBAT), and support workforce development and training programs, creating 1,000 jobs. (SUNY Downstate/EDC, 2012)
- Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn: Issue RFP for adaptive reuse of Empire Store. (BBP, 2011)
- Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn: Finalize agreement for community and cultural use at Tobacco Warehouse. (BBP, 2012)
- Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn: Issue RFP to privatize the 6-acre DCAS Auction lot to allow for redevelopment. (DCAS/BNYDC, 2013)
- Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn: Begin public review and plan for redevelopment of the 6-acre Admirals Row site, which will create approximately 500 industrial and retail jobs. (BNYDC, 2011)
- Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn: Expand Steiner Studios to create a new studio and an ancillary entertainment and media space. Expansion will create 1,200 jobs. (BNYDC, 2013)
- Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn: Begin construction on the Green Manufacturing Center. (BNYDC, 2013).
- Coney Island, Brooklyn: Complete development of 6.5-acre amusement park in historic Coney Island Amusement Area. (EDC, 2012)
- Mill Basin, Brooklyn: Complete property transfer for commercial development with associated waterfront open space and permanent protection of Four Sparrows Marsh along Flatbush Ave. (EDC, 2011)
- Sunset Park, Brooklyn: Issue RFP for the lease and development of a 130,000-square-foot property at the Bush Terminal Complex, creating approximately 100 industrial jobs. (EDC, 2011)
- Sunset Park, Brooklyn: Relocate NYPD tow pound to revitalize maritime-related activities in South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. (EDC, 2012)
- Williamsburg, Brooklyn: Commence redevelopment of the Domino Sugar factory, with 30 percent affordable housing units, commercial space, community facility, and publicly accessible waterfront open space. (HPD, 2013)
- Edgemere, Queens: Continue construction in Urban Renewal Area, adding an additional 434 housing units, 5.5 acres of parkland, 4 acres of restored wetlands, and infrastructure and pedestrian improvements to the existing 307 housing-unit development. (HPD/DPR/DDC, 2013)
- Hunter's Point South, Queens: Commence construction of 900-1,000 new housing units, and complete construction of schools, roadways, and infrastructure. (HPD/SCA/EDC, 2013)
- Rockaways, Queens: Transform vacant lot at the Beach 80th St. Marina into a public waterfront esplanade, including docks, piers, a kayak launch, and a retail facility/catering hall. (EDC, 2011)
- Rockaways, Queens: Complete construction of new phase of Arverne by the Sea: the Dunes, a development of 270 two-family homes and a new YMCA recreation center. (HPD, 2011)
- Stapleton, Staten Island: Begin mixed-use development agreement of 7-acre New Stapleton Waterfront site. (EDC, 2011)
- St. George, Staten Island: Execute development agreement for residential, retail, and open space at the 24-acre, former Coast Guard site. (EDC, 2011)
- Battery Park, Manhattan: Complete renovation and restoration at historic Pier A for public use. (BPCA, 2011)
- Lower Manhattan: Develop hotel, restaurant, and community use at Battery Maritime Building. (EDC, 2011)
- Stuyvesant Cove: Invest through in-kind contributions in Solar One, the city's first solar-powered Green Energy, Arts, and Education Center, for maintenance and operations of the adjacent park. (EDC, 2013)