



Public Comment Summary

Battery Park City Authority
North/West Battery Park City Resiliency Project Walkshop
October 28, 2021, Walkshop Notes

Meeting Date/Time: October 28, 2021 – 10:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Attendees: Garrett Avery, Hogan Edelberg, Kim Robledo, Claudia Filomena, Nora Madonick, Karina Vangani, Caroline Ibarra, Joseph Smith, Myraan Mays, Sebastian Kogler, Members of the public

Route 1: Tribeca/BMCC/Hudson River Park, Location A

Project Team:

- The intersection of Moore and Greenwich Street is the highest point in the scope of the Battery Park City North project.
- Project team is pursuing FEMA Certification for the project and therefore this area needs to have 1-foot-high barriers on that corner to achieve the requisite 18 feet.
- Project team suggests either a planter or a deployable may be appropriate at this site.

Question from participant: How will the proposed flood barriers on Moore Street affect the pedestrian experience?

- Project team response: The original North Battery Park City project aimed to get as close to the wall as possible. This project further attempts to have dual-purpose uses for the flood barriers. This topic will also be addressed with NYCDOT.

Question from participant: Who administers the grates?

- Project team response: Con Edison.

Question from participant: What about raising the roads?

- Project team response: Raising the roads is open for study.

Route 1: Tribeca/BMCC/Hudson River Park, Location B

Project team: By West Street, the requisite height of flood barriers needs to be 8 feet to be FEMA certified. On the corner of West and Moore, it will visually block the back of house operations.

Question from participant: Will it be a concrete wall?

- Project team response: The material is open for study, but its purpose will be to help protect the school (CUNY BMCC) and the City from coastal flooding, including critical infrastructure.

Question from participant: Could you use the concrete as a carbon sink or use carbon capture concrete? Will the building process be carbon neutral?

- Project team response: The project team will review parameters for carbon neutrality in the RFP.

Question from participant: Are you working with the school?

- Project team response: Yes, we have reached out to BMCC and learned that there are no building plans at BMCC within the next ten years.

Question from participant: Could the project induce flooding in Hudson River Park or a previously unflooded area?

- Project team response: No.

Question from participant: What does the project team consider at-risk?

- Project team response: There's currently no prescribed solution. The project team is taking public feedback about what people would like to see.

Question from participant: When will the project be complete?

- Project team response: The Design-Build team will be on board by June, with a final completion goal of 2026.

Project team: One potential solution might be deployables and columns around the bike lanes.

Question from participant: Does this mean that the Hudson River Park is going to be flooded?

- Project team response: As the project alignment is determined, the project can build for resiliency for parts of the park outside of the line. We do recognize the importance of maintaining physical and visual access to the water.

Question from participant: Can you just elevate the park?

- Project team response: Elevating the park is technically possible. However, because of the bulkhead and the size of the abutment that would be needed, elevating the park would be financially prohibitive.

Question from participant: When would the gates be deployed? Would people outside the gates be able to get in?

- Project team response: The gates would be controllable and would come down for emergency access. Furthermore, they would only be deployed during an evacuation order.

Question from participant: Can they build the resiliency structures on West Street?

- Project team response: The DEP has advised that the resiliency project's structures cannot be built to the parallel with the sewer that runs below the median on West Street. There is a 15-foot no-build zone on each side.

Question from participant: What is being done to green the space and improve water conservation along the West Street Promenade?

- Project team response: The project team is building the project parameters to include green considerations. We will attempt to define the parameters with terraced, native, and saltwater/brackish water-tolerant plants.

Route 1: Tribeca/BMCC/Hudson River Park, Location C

Project team question: How will a connection be made to Rockefeller Park? And Stuyvesant High School?

- Project team response: We may need to redesign the platform that the promenade sits on. The Design-Build team will likely have to raise the area significantly once a more supportive platform is in place.

Questions and statements from participant: Where will the terracing go? Will it have to be concrete? The garden is too small, and the Children's Garden is overly subscribed, as it is.

- Project team response: That is a design challenge with a solution that has yet to be determined. The corner will cause the footprint of the Esplanade to expand to the north slightly to make space for the climate resiliency adjustments.

Route 2: North Esplanade/Rockefeller Park, Location D

Question from participant: Have you gotten the landowners and apartment owners on board?

- Project team response: The project team has been working with landowners and apartment owners.

Statement from participant: This might sound crazy, but I want to think bigger. What about solar walkways? Or, for example, in Holland, they have made floating farms. I'm not necessarily suggesting a floating farm would be a good idea for the Hudson, but I would love to see a section of this budget allocated to exciting, new ideas.

- Project team response: We could potentially build incentives for innovation into the RFP.

Request from participant: Is it possible to make this area (the North/West side of Battery Park) more attractive?

Route 2: North Esplanade/Rockefeller Park, Location E

Project team question: Let's talk about Rockefeller Park, and what the opportunities might be there. What kinds of things do you want to see in this park area?

Comment from participant: There's no other large lawn to come to in all of Tribeca and the park gets a lot of use. It's important that the park stays accessible to everyone. Other important features include keeping the trees, the river views and the playground.

Question from participant: What is being done to the north of Battery Park City? What about what's going on in Wagner Park?

- Project team response: For Wagner Park, in most cases, the benchmark elevation changes are driven by coastal modeling. That modeling suggests that Wagner Park would be significantly impacted, and so needs more resilient and larger structures. That condition, and therefore requirement, is less likely in Rockefeller Park.

Question from participant: How is each section of the park's resiliency project being considered? It seems sort of piecemeal. Are the sections being considered together?

- Project team response: The potential conditions can vary so greatly that each section of Battery Park City must be considered individually and in concert at the same time, so that each segment meets local resilience needs and does not cause detrimental effects to the overall resiliency of the comprehensive coastal resilience project.
- Project team follow up response: Everything on the unprotected side of the alignment will need to be redesigned to be green and drainable so as to maintain use and allow for flood resiliency.

Question from participant: Is this being done with Manhattan Green Infrastructure? What about what's going on the East Side?

- Project team response: The City is under a consent order by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). The City must prioritize its weakest points. We do not have a CSO (Coastal States Organization) in Manhattan. It is also exceedingly difficult to do biosinks (coastal reservoirs) in Manhattan, due to bedrock and subways.

Project team question: In this programmatic region, where is the line of protection to screen the park effectively?

- Project team response: The line of protection may have to take up a large area and will affect the park daily if the park is on the unprotected side of the alignment. Options could include a raised esplanade and park, or a hill that conceals a flood protection system. We cannot push out the pier any further than it already is. The northern edge can be expanded upon, but it can't go west into the river.

Related suggestion from participant: Mistertowers for the summer to keep cool would be a good addition to this project area.

Question from participant: Will there be access for river rescues?

- Project team response: Yes.
- We don't yet know where the alignment would be, which is a challenge for modeling.

Statement from participant: Preservation of trees is key as they provide shade.

Question from participant: Is water capture a consideration? In California, they have cisterns under the fields.

- Project team response: We are considering it, but cisterns would be difficult with the amount of space available.

Questions from participant: During Hurricane Sandy, Teardrop Park had millions in damage. How does that compare to the plan here? Was Rockefeller Park underwater?

- Project team response: During Sandy, Teardrop Park had an 11-to-12-foot storm surge, and the project area has a 13-to-14-foot baseline before storm surge. Sandy slightly flooded Rockefeller Park.

Question from participant: We had 16 ½ inches of rain in one night, how would that get dealt with?

- Project team response: That amount of rain is so large, it requires a complex plan—there is not a single solution to address this.

Suggestion from participant: Get BPCA's horticultural crew to an environmental meeting to get a better idea of saltwater impact.

Question from participant: What about the trees? Are they saltwater resistant?

- Project team response: They may be resistant to salt spray, but not to inundation. One of the planting requirements is to have native and saltwater tolerant plants.

Follow-up suggestion from participants: If the project needed to remove trees, they should be reused to make new benches or other features.

Question from participant: How would the resiliency project work in practice?

- Project team response: The current baseline is 13-14 feet of storm surge under "normal" future conditions. The system is also built to withstand 6-foot wave crests on top of the 13-to 14-foot baseline.

Question from participant: What aspects of the program address rain?

- Project team response: We have modeled several different rain conditions, factoring in timing and how to pump out the rain. If the tide is high, water cannot be pumped out as easily. However, if the tide is low, it can be. Therefore, there will have to be a capture and hold system (passive or active) to wait for the appropriate time to pump the rainwater into the river.

Question from participant: How would the capture and hold system work?

- Project team response: As an example, we may recontour the lawn to allow runoff to go passively into the river and pair that with a holding tank.

Question from Participant: Is the project team focusing on passive resilience?

- Project team response: The project team is looking at all options, including passive resilience as well as deployable and active measures.

Route 3: Belvedere Plaza/North Cove Marina, Location F

Question from Project team: How does the public want to use this space? For example, would the sea wall be deployable? Would it completely obstruct the walkway between the North end and Rockefeller Park and the Oculus? It may have to be because of the inability to expand further into the harbor and the consideration for the ferry terminal.

Question from participant: Has a new location been considered for the ferry terminal?

- Project team response: Not yet. To move the ferry terminal, route and environmental studies would be needed.

Relocating the terminal is something the participants would like the project to consider.

Question from participant: Will the Esplanade have to be relocated?

- Project team response: We are considering a few options, including flipping the upper and lower esplanades so that the upper Esplanade is on the outside. This would require rebuilding the plate, which would likely be necessary in this section.

Question from participant: Is the East Side rebuilding still going to cost \$1 billion per mile?

- Project team response: To our understanding, that's the case. However, that is not part of this project.

Question from participant: What will the full project cost?

- Project team response: Current estimates are between \$550 million and \$575 million.

Question from participant: Why is there such a difference in strategies between different sections of the waterfront? It cost \$110 million to shore up the seaport. This is costing a lot more.

- Project team response: In addition to each part of the waterfront having unique needs, this project is being designed as a 50-to-75-year fix. The City's Seaport plan considered that the Seaport is even more low lying than most places in the City, including Battery Park and is in more immediate need of repair. This project is attempting to answer: "What will Battery Park look like in 2100?"

Statement from participant: It feels like the city doesn't want to admit that the East Side project is an interim fix and that, without a single organization behind the entire coastal resiliency of Lower Manhattan, the results are going to be ad-hoc.

- Project team response: When the HATS study was stopped, there was a lot of interagency conversation and there was progress in working together with the EPA, which is responsible for New Jersey.

Follow-up question from participant: So, you think centralized planning is a good thing?

- Project team response: Central information is a good thing. Everyone must coordinate so that there aren't knock-on effects on other parts of the island.

Question from participant: Does the project team feel that the one-half billion (\$300 million) was spent well?

- Project team response: We don't have sufficient information to comment on that.

Question from Participant: Who is working adjacent to BPCA to the north?

- Project team response: It's our understanding that there is a paused study by the Army Corps of Engineers to the north of this project.

Project team Question: How would the public feel about rebuilding the breakwater at the marina with a floodgate?

- **Generally positive response from participants, especially to avoiding a more inland alignment**
 - o **Follow up question from participant: Have you looked at what the building requirements would be for a more inland alignment, as well as an expanded breakwater?**

- Project team response: Yes, these are factors that the project team is considering.

Question from Participant: What does Brookfield Place think?

- Project team Response: The project team is working on getting their input.

Route 3: Belvedere Plaza/North Cove Marina, Location H

- Project team: Some design considerations for this site include the mall and the PATH train tunnels that are below Brookfield Plaza.

Question from participant: Where is the exhaust for those trains?

- Project team response: Train exhaust is in the south. Additionally, there are exiting water outflows below Brookfield and the Marina.

Project team questions: What is the public's benchmark for success? What do they see as being successful? What is essential to Study? What is essential to include?

Question from Participant: What's the current thinking about the wooded area to the south of Brookfield?

- Project team response: It is a quiet and contemplative space. Would you like to see that area maintained?

Follow-up question from participant: Yes, is it privately owned?

- Project team response: It is under a private lease from Battery Park City.
- Project team follow-up statement: One potential solution might be placing a seawall in front of the wooded area.

Comment from participant: The plaza is a flexible space and it's great for programs such as the last year's tennis tournament.

Comment from a different participant: I would prefer the space to remain decommercialized.

- Project team response: One option might be to use an absorptive material that allows water to pass through while maintaining the use of the space for the public. This would only be feasible if the alignment were behind the Marina.

Comment from participant: I believe that it's critical that this space (Brookfield Plaza) be kept public. For example, the Tribeca Film Festival is free to the public and held in Brookfield Plaza. This plaza is one of the few places where you can safely teach a kid to ride a bike in New York. I would prefer to create a seawall at the outer edge of the Marina.

Comment from participant: Accessibility is an issue, especially the number of stairs. It makes it difficult for anyone who can't use stairs to access the mall from the plaza. It feels a bit disorienting as well.

- Project team response: The project team can work on a terracing solution that prioritizes accessibility.

Route 4: South Esplanade/South Cove route, Location I

Project team statement: Conditions are uniform all the way along this 1500-foot stretch along the north and south of Rector Gate.

Question from participant: Is this an opportunity to build up green space?

- Project team response: This can be done to some extent with additional flip up gates that would extend from one side of Rector Gate to another.

Comment from participant: People who commute along this stretch would be upset if the climate resiliency project disrupted their ability to commute along the Esplanade.

Comment and question from participant: Right after Hurricane Sandy, I went up to Rockaway and the hurricane had pulverized their entire pier, including the concrete. Is that something that could happen here?

- Project team response: It depends on the storm and unique conditions, but Rockaway suffered a direct hit. This location has additional protections due to its positioning on the river.

Route 4: South Esplanade/South Cove route, Location J

Project team question: Is there a desire to maintain the pedestrian walkway here? Additionally, do we want south cove to be protected?

Comment from participant: Taking South Cove away entirely would make so many people sad. I would almost rather watch it be eroded slowly than have it be removed in its entirety.

General comment on participant sentiment: This conversation about the section spanning South Cove and the Memorial evoked an emotional response among people who have known Battery Park City for a long time. They expressed that everything they knew as landmarks is now going away or changing rapidly.

Comment from participant: There's a lot of emotional connection here. I think a lot of people would treat it like Venice and just put on waders.

Question from Participant: How will the tie in work?

- Project team response: There will be flip up gates across the tie in point. There is also an opportunity for in-habitat restoration.

Project team statement: Line of protection will stay near the museum, which means a lot of the trees will have to go.

Comment and question from participant: It would kill people if these trees were just turned into mulch. Is there a way to reuse the wood?

- Project team response: BPCA Parks will use trees for benches and other timber needs. BPCA also has a goal of minimizing trucking by utilizing barges.

General comment on participant sentiment: Generally positive response to minimizing

trucking. Participants expressed concern over the number of trucks that are going to be used in the project already.

Comment from participant: We would like to walk further south through the Battery to review the projects you have going on there at a future time. We feel it's essential that we see that as well.

Question from participant: How is this project being paid for?

- Project team response BPCA has bond issuing authority.

Follow-up comment from participant: I'm unsure if tax base will be able to service the debt.

Comment from participants: We would like to invite building management and the heads of resident associations to the next walkshop or a subsequent meeting.

Comment from participant: We loved the manner of delivery for this.