

Community Priorities for the LIC Waterfront

Your LIC Public Engagement Recap

Workshops, Webinars, and Online Engagement

Overview

Long Island City is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood made up of many different communities – some of which have been historically segregated and inequitably resourced, a divide that was emphasized during the community outreach process that informs this report, and amplified by the COVID-19 crisis. The principles outlined in this report give a voice to the needs and dreams of the many community members who engaged in this process over the last year.

This effort came together in response to a call to action by city government and the local community. During summer 2019, the New York City Council gathered stakeholders with property along the Long Island City waterfront and challenged them to create a unified planning approach to better meet the needs of the community. As a result, four stakeholders – MAG Partners, Plaxall, Simon Baron Development, and TF Cornerstone – came together to work across property lines and engage the community in an open and collaborative process to create a plan for 28 acres along the Long Island City waterfront. The process was called Your LIC.



Through the Your LIC community engagement process, the team sought to build on and contribute to a longstanding conversation among local stakeholders about the future of the Long Island City waterfront. From the outset, the Your LIC public outreach process was informed by prior meetings, studies and recommendations of local groups, including, among others, the LIC Partnership’s LIC Comprehensive Plan, Municipal Art Society’s 2018 report which included Anable Basin, and Queens Community Board 2’s Waterfront Working Group recommendations (these materials can be found [HERE](#)).

In response to the community’s desire for a comprehensive plan for this part of Long Island City, the Your LIC team launched an extensive public engagement process with in-person workshops and online forums to share ideas. These workshops were led by the authors of this report, Dr. Gail Mellow and Bishop Mitchell Taylor, in collaboration with local and citywide experts.

Over five public workshops, including the final two which were moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and through online engagements, the team had nearly 1,000 participants spanning the wider Long Island City neighborhood, including hundreds from the five NYCHA developments in Western Queens, as well as local business owners, artists, parents, local youth, and more.

The principles outlined in this report are taken directly from the five workshops and represent key priorities for the Long Island City community. This community engagement process and the resulting principles are the foundation for the comprehensive plan the Your LIC team is developing for 28 acres along the Long Island City waterfront.

About the Public Engagement Process

“We set out to create a truly inclusive process from the very beginning. We wanted to hear from everyone in the community. To achieve this, we created five expert-led workshops and encouraged those who could not attend in-person workshops to share their thoughts online. With over one thousand participants attending the workshops and engaging online, we are inspired by the tremendous turn out.”

– Dr. Gail O. Mellow

“NYCHA is the backbone of this community, and with this process NYCHA residents had a seat at the table. The Your LIC team’s goal is to create a plan that works for the entire community. During these workshops, we heard loud and clear what the priorities are for our NYCHA neighbors: real pathways for jobs and economic mobility, community resources like schools and public open space that work for everyone, and so much more.” – Bishop Mitchell Taylor

Your LIC hosted five workshops that were each accompanied by an online engagement on the YourLIC.nyc website. The online engagement served to make the workshop more accessible to the entire community. Not everyone has the time, resources, or ability to show up to a meeting in person – for example, those who work in the evenings, or those who don’t have childcare coverage. The online engagement democratized the engagement process and resulted in hundreds of additional comments and ideas that helped shape the team’s proposal. From the very beginning, this community engagement process was designed to be one in which the team would be able to hear a diverse set of opinions and voices from the community and beyond, regardless of their stance on the project or their ability to show up in-person.

Public workshops and online engagements:

- On November 21, 2019, Your LIC launched its first in-person workshop at Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement focused on **Economic Empowerment and Career Development**. Approximately 120 community members participated in person. Online, participants were asked to share their stories and experiences about workforce development.
- On December 16, 2019, Your LIC held its second in-person workshop at Hunter’s Point Community Middle School, focusing on **Resiliency and Public Open Space**. Approximately 100

community members participated in person. Online, participants were asked to share ideas for the types of uses and activities they wanted to see in a waterfront park, along with discussing strategies to protect the waterfront from storms and climate change.

- On January 27, 2020, Your LIC held its third in-person workshop at The Plaxall Gallery, focusing on **Community Resources: Schools, Recreation and Culture**. Approximately 100 community members participated in person. Online, participants were asked to share their ideas for the types of community resources they would like to see on the waterfront.
- On March 9, 2020, Your LIC held its fourth workshop on **Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning: Mobility and Sustainable Infrastructure** online via Zoom due to the heightened risk of large-scale in-person gatherings in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 80 participants joined the virtual workshop. Online, participants were asked to share questions for the project team to answer.
- On June 30, 2020, Your LIC held the fifth and final workshop on **Density & Uses: Comprehensive Planning for an Inclusive LIC** online via Zoom as in-person meetings were still deemed too high-risk due to COVID-19. Approximately 170 participants joined the virtual workshop. Online, participants were asked to share questions for the development team to answer.

All takeaways from the workshops can be found [HERE](#) and all online engagement can be found [HERE](#).

Workforce Advisory Meeting

In May 2020, the Your LIC team hosted a virtual Workforce Advisory Committee meeting with over 30 local and citywide experts to gather feedback on how this project can provide a pathway to job and career opportunities for residents of the surrounding communities. Participants included educators, nonprofits, workforce development service providers, and employers in the area. The Your LIC team looks forward to sharing more details on the workforce programming that resulted from this and earlier conversations in a “Workforce Blueprint,” which is currently being developed.

Principles for Economic Empowerment & Career Development

“People need a chance. Not everyone goes to college or trade school. Even if you were locked up, people make mistakes. We need a place to walk in, explain your skills, where you can be hands-on.”

– Workshop 1 Online Participant

“The community needs to come together more. I went to business school and would like to find a way to use my skills to help people in the entire community, like start a food co-op. There has to be more opportunities for the entire community to become one and work together.” – Workshop 1 Participant



Your LIC Workshop 1 (November 21, 2019)

Your LIC’s first workshop focused on **Economic Empowerment & Career Development** and looked at the benefits a new mixed-use development will bring to the current Long Island City population through this lens. While this was the first workshop that took place well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S., the importance and takeaways are more important now than ever as the city looks to recover economically and bring jobs back to New Yorkers. Through the in-person workshop and online engagement, the key principles the Your LIC team heard from the community are:

1. **Bridge socioeconomic divides in the community.** The Long Island City waterfront should help address the economic divides by incorporating strategies that connect longtime and newer residents and by providing economic opportunity. It should also spur individual economic growth that allows people to be part of the community as it changes, and offer pathways for small businesses and entrepreneurs to expand and prosper.
2. **Build vibrant small businesses and support entrepreneurs.** The Long Island City waterfront should grow a diverse business community from different sectors by providing space for growth, flexibility, and shared services, as well as technical assistance.
3. **Intertwine education, skills training, and economic growth.** The Long Island City waterfront should: support life-long career development, with a focus on integrating all sectors of the community into appropriate levels of employment; link community-level economic development with economic empowerment at the individual level; calibrate education and training to different populations; and strengthen connections among local organizations, schools, and businesses.

You can read a full executive summary of the first workshop’s finding [HERE](#).

Principles for Resiliency & Public Open Space

“The City has 2018 Waterfront flooding data which is more recent than the FEMA records. Has this been taken into consideration? I’m worried because the 9/11 Museum needed to be raised because of flooding, and that the same thing might happen in Long Island City. The walkway by the new Library in Long Island City already flooded, even on sunny days.” – Workshop 2 Participant

“We need more activity and a plaza street that ends closer to the water, this way there can be a natural breeze throughout. The boardwalk should connect along the restoration area. This way people can run around the whole park.” – Workshop 2 Participant



Your LIC Workshop 2 (December 16, 2019)

Your LIC’s second workshop focused on **Resiliency & Public Open Space**, discussing the types of features and public areas the district should include. Through the in-person workshop and online engagement, the key principles the Your LIC team heard from the community are:

1. **Create abundant green space to improve the environment resiliency of LIC.** Plans for the site area should become a model waterfront resiliency through comprehensive planning and smart design begin to address long-standing resiliency problems.
2. **Create multiple cultural and recreational spaces.** Plans for the site should build community, providing access to markets, educational spaces, and cultural activities, and encourage use and accessibility.
3. **Ensure collaborative planning and fact-based design.** Plans for the site should pull from most current data and planning parameters and should include the long-term financial upkeep of the public amenities. Build with the awareness of current, near-term, and future residential density and its impact on the environment and city infrastructure capacity. As much as possible, efforts to make the community more resilient should extend beyond just the waterfront.

You can read a full executive summary of the second workshop’s findings [HERE](#).

Principles for Community Resources

“I teach at LaGuardia Community College. In that community with high-rise buildings, they have gyms, pools. There is no place to work out or swim in this community. We need a gymnasium, with first-class swimming pools where kids can learn to swim. Indoor pools so it's good to be used all year long.” – Workshop 3 Participant

“We need to have professional development for artists so that they can learn how to turn their passion for their art into a career. We need to have financial literacy classes, workshops and lessons on how to build resumes, interview prep, build portfolios, pitches, how to create dance reels, demo tapes, and more.” – Workshop 3 Participant



Your LIC Workshop 3 (January 27, 2020)

Your LIC’s third workshop focused on **Community Resources: Schools, Recreation, & Culture**. The team and community discussed the type of community resources LIC needs and what a new mixed-use district could bring. Through the in-person workshop and online engagement, the key principles the Your LIC team heard from the community are:

1. **Education needs to be a priority for planning the district.** Plans for the site area should prioritize the creation of schools and provide an abundance of linked educational services.
2. **Create recreational and community facilities for the entire neighborhood to enjoy.** Plans for the site should include recreational and community facilities that link the entire community together and provide space for all neighbors, including students and seniors, and those from surrounding communities.
3. **Creates spaces and programming to support arts and culture in LIC.** Plans for the site should create the spaces, programming and policies required to support LIC artists, anchored with spaces for the community to gather.

You can read a full executive summary of the third workshop’s findings [HERE](#).

Principles for Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning

“You guys gotta stop with the silo thinking. Comprehensive planning means looking at development holistically, comprehensively.” – Workshop 4 Participant

“What should our goals be in terms of sustainability? What is the global best practice?” – Workshop 4 Participant



Your LIC’s fourth workshop focused on **Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning: Mobility and Sustainable Infrastructure**. The team gathered residents’ feedback on the transit options and sustainable infrastructure, including strategies for energy, water, and healthy buildings needed to connect and strengthen the entire neighborhood. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and State of Emergency declared by Governor Cuomo, the in-person workshop was changed to an online webinar, which included real-time questions and comments from the community. The webinar was supplemented with an online engagement. The key principles the Your LIC team heard from the community are:

1. **Sustainable and resilient infrastructure is a priority and should extend beyond the 28-acre site.** Participants called for the use of as many strategies as possible for resilient and sustainable infrastructure to create comprehensive protection for the Long Island City waterfront.
2. **Mobility and connectivity is important to the future of Long Island City, especially expanding mobility options to neighboring NYCHA housing developments.** Participants actively engaged in questioning the structure and future of mobility measures in the 28-acre district and beyond. A number of participants inquired as to how public transportation upgrades may or may not fit into the project.
3. **The role of density is critical to understanding sustainability measures and water environmental mitigation strategies.** Participant questions about water centered less on the proposed water usage reduction, water reuse, and water environmental mitigation strategies than on the relationship of number of residents, building any structure, and a long-term future horizon for any building along the water in New York City.

You can read a full executive summary of the fourth workshop’s findings [HERE](#).

Principles for Density & Uses

“I have lived here for 20 years. How is this density going to affect the infrastructure of our community? We are already so dense with the amount of people going in and out of the city and the subway cannot support our density. What is this development going to do to help that?” – Workshop 5 Participant

“I’ve lived here since I was four years old, and 25 years ago I heard the same stuff from the Queens Clock Tower. How do we know you can pull this off and what are the assurances to the people who already live here that you will provide real benefits for the community?” – Workshop 5 Participant



Your LIC’s fifth and final workshop focused on

Density & Uses: Comprehensive Planning for an Inclusive LIC. The workshop focused on planning for a waterfront that works for Long Island City residents and supports the healthy, equitable future of the community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Workshop 5 happened over a Zoom video conference, with attendees joining smaller breakout sessions to discuss their ideas and thoughts. The workshop was supplemented with an online engagement. The key principles the Your LIC team heard from the community are:

1. **Any new development needs to be equitable and benefit the entire community, with a priority on jobs creation and housing, especially affordable housing.** The team needs to make sure that workforce development is equitable and protects manufacturers and artists and truly reaches residents of the western Queens NYCHA communities.
2. **Creating a true mixed-use district.** Plans must ensure that infrastructure can handle increased capacity, including wastewater and transportation, and ensure that the design of the project leads to a diverse, activated, and flourishing district that brings benefits to all of Long Island City
3. **The vision for the waterfront should be contextual.** Plans should take into account the height of buildings, the ratio of density to public open space, the impact of COVID-19 on demand for residential versus commercial space, and the broader impact of new development on the Long Island City community.

You can read a full executive summary of the fifth workshop’s findings [HERE](#).