



January 20, 2021

Nicole Garcia
Queens Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
120-55 Queens Boulevard – Rm 285
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

James Patchett
President and CEO
New York City Economic Development Corporation
One Liberty Street
New York, NY 10006

Dear Commissioner Garcia and President Patchett,

I am writing today in support of the Newtown Creek Alliance's call for a redesign of the proposed bulkhead restoration at Vernon Boulevard in Long Island City, Queens.

In New York City's most inaccessible reaches of the waterfront, we must seize opportunities when they are presented. Over the past 20 years, multiple community-based planning efforts (including one in partnership with the Waterfront Alliance) have pushed for this stretch of more than 100 feet waterfront to become accessible and restored.

There are two areas of modification to the current design that we would like to see better reflected, reinforcing community asks:

Increase access

The current design does not leave room for any direct access to the creek edge, even as an adjacent community boating program is in need of more established infrastructure for access. We believe that there are both low-cost interim and more expansive opportunities to develop access for people and boats, ranging from harder infrastructure step-downs to a more gradual slope with plantings and walkways.

Restore ecology

The current design is what the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG) considers a low habitat value solution.¹ The Newtown Creek Alliance and the Department of Environmental Protection have both implemented projects to increase natural enhancements of Newtown Creek's edge. An improved design could incorporate plantings and habitat-friendly materials (e.g., concrete that supports shellfish and invertebrate settlement) into a more vertical design or again, step back from the edge to a grade that makes habitat restoration possible on at least part of the edge. At another site in the creek, Waterfront Alliance worked with a landowner and engineer to scope such a stepped-back design and found that it would have been lower cost than a conventional design due to reductions in fill and mitigation costs. Increased plantings at the site would also support many of the benefits the City

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Cortney Koenig Worrall
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is trying to achieve - reducing urban heat and stormwater and promoting community resilience and stewardship opportunities.

The replacement of this bulkhead is such an opportunity that should not be wasted. We look forward to working with the Department and the Development Corporation to advance public access to our waterways in Newtown Creek and Citywide.

Sincerely,

Cortney Worrall
President and CEO
Waterfront Alliance