

November 11th, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Garcia,

We are writing today in response to your [October 28th letter](#) to Queens Community Board 2 (CB2) regarding Newtown Creek Bulkhead Restoration at Vernon Blvd. In April, we submitted [comments to CB2](#) on the [original DOT/EDC proposal](#) (April 6th, 2020) and participated in that month's CB2 Transportation Committee meeting wherein we strongly opposed the design as it failed to:

- + **Create access to the water**
- + **Provide environmental benefit**
- + **Reflect community input** (see our previous comments for reference)

While we understand the urgency to replace the Vernon Blvd. bulkhead and protect the numerous critical infrastructural items that lie below and adjacent to the site, we can not support any shoreline redesign on city-owned property along the Creek that fails to achieve the above needs. DOT's statement that the currently proposed design would not preclude the addition of various features (such as water access, public space, vegetation, etc) is troublesome as it is not an actual commitment and adding these elements after the fact will be substantially more difficult, expensive and restrictive once the proposed construction is complete. Additionally, we are concerned that the dramatic elevation increase (13 feet at the top of the seawall) will only further restrict the ability to add public access and environmental benefits while not actually protecting the surrounding businesses from flood waters (whose shorelines are well below a 13 foot elevation). We believe that a shoreline redesign that utilizes green infrastructure to absorb and slow storm surge would be much more beneficial in protecting the community than a hard edge that prevents the movement of water or displaces it directly into the neighboring properties.

We appreciate the difficulty in facilitating meaningful dialog with numerous stakeholders during the current pandemic, but these current challenges should not impact the long term reality of a project that will restrict the ability of Queens residents, workers and students to interface with their public waterway for decades to come - this is simply unacceptable. With the exception of Hunters Point Park South, the entire Queens shoreline along Newtown Creek (approximately 5 miles) has no official, nor safe public access. Our organization has been working tirelessly to cleanup and improve abandoned street ends along the Creek shoreline (in formal agreement with DOT), but we need forward thinking and investment from the City to create real and lasting access. As has been argued for the past 2 decades, this site remains one of the most conspicuous and tangible locations to help change the borough's relationship to it's often neglected and long degraded southern border. Unfortunately, the current proposed design doesn't achieve this. As such, we ask that DOT and EDC reconvene with CB2, as well



as other community stakeholders, to achieve a shoreline design that not only protects from further erosion, but benefits the community in meaningful and restorative ways.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this issue and look forward to ongoing dialog towards achieving shared goals at the Vernon Blvd. street end.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Elkins".

Willis Elkins

Executive Director

[welkins@newtowncreekalliance.org](mailto:welkins@newtowncreekalliance.org)

347-504-6701

CC:

Jana Pohorelsky, NYC EDC

Eleni DeSiervo, NYC EDC

Albert Silvestri, NYC DOT

Samantha Dolgoff, NYC DOT

Adam Berkowitz, NYC DOT

Jason Barney, NYC DOT

Gretha Suarez, NYC DOT

Lisa Deller, Chairwoman Queens Community Board 2

Sheila Lewandowski, Chair of Transportation Committee Queens Community Board 2

Debra Markell Kleinert, District Manager Queens Community Board 2

NYC Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer

NY State Assembly Member Cathy Nolan

US Congress Member Carolyn Maloney

Queens Borough President Elect, Donovan Richards

Brent O'Leary, Hunters Point Civic Association

Rob Basch, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy

Erik Baard, HarborLAB

Dorothy Morehead, Queens CB2

Michael Marrella, NYC Department of City Planning

Mitch Waxman, Newtown Creek Alliance