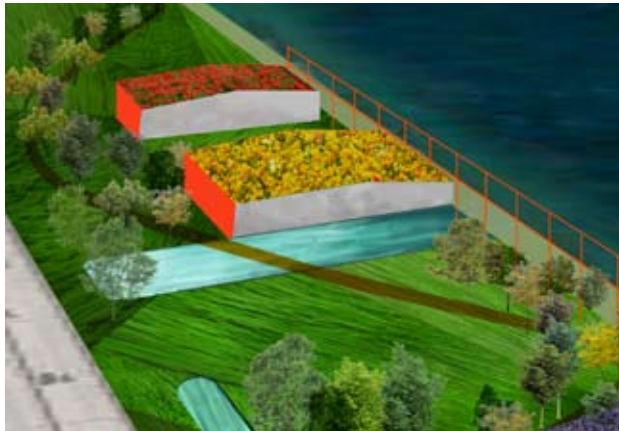




A PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR THE EAST RIVER WATERFRONT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

O.U.R. WATERFRONT COALITION



INTRODUCTION

For generations, both the Lower East Side and Chinatown have been a home, workplace and a marketplace for generations of immigrants. Although the area has undergone profound gentrification in the past decade, residents are still largely low-income and working class. In 2008, the average income for Community District 3, which includes the Lower East Side and Chinatown, was \$32,038 and nearly 85% of residents live in subsidized or rent-regulated housing. However, New York City policies have fueled the ongoing gentrification of these neighborhoods. This has led to high-end development projects, the deregulation of rent regulated housing stock and displacement of long time residents. As gentrification continues to expand towards the East River Waterfront, it becomes increasingly difficult for low-income people to have access to services and public space in their neighborhood.

In 2005 the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the City's official economic development organization, launched a plan to dramatically redevelop the waterfront in the Lower East Side and Chinatown. Overall, this plan was not responsive to the needs of the surrounding community and did not include any mechanisms for community input or participation in decision making about the development.

The East River Waterfront: Current Site Conditions



Waterfront "access" is not possible along the length of Pier 42, as the FDR is located at grade



Waterfront "access" is not possible along the length of Pier 36 because of the shed building



FDR Drive along South Street



Beneath the FDR Drive

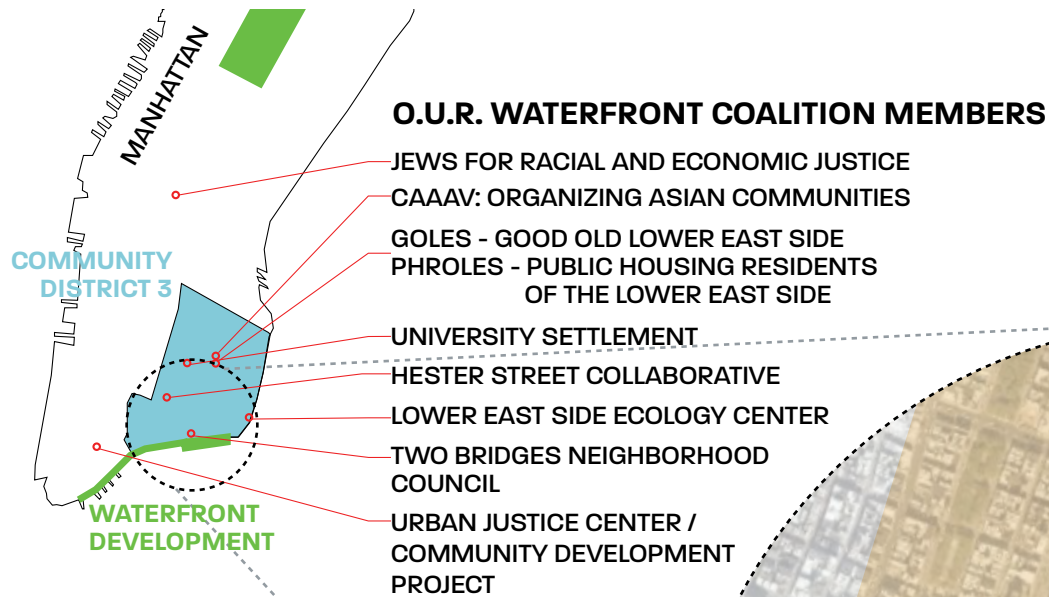


Esplanade and bike path

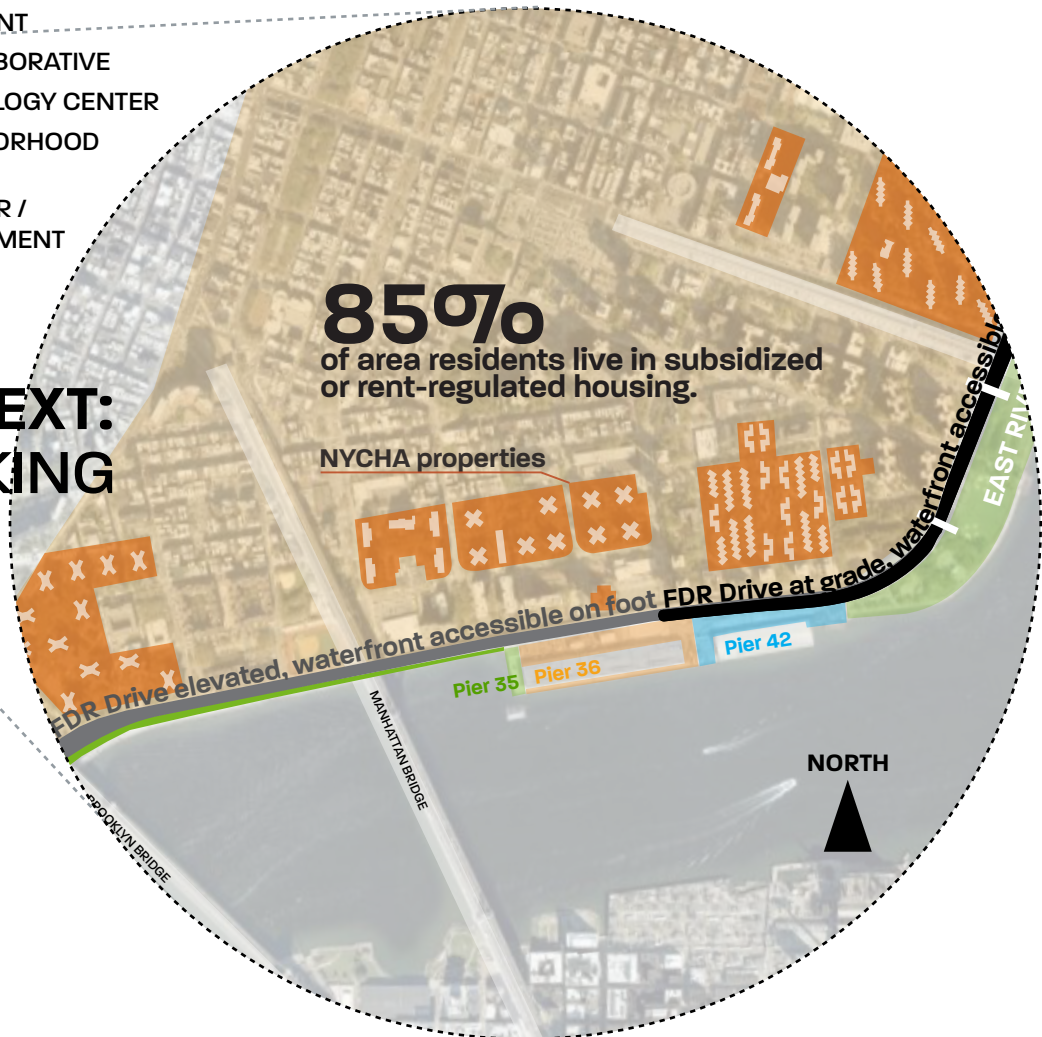


Esplanade with view of Pier 35 and shed building on Pier 36

WHO WE ARE: THE O.U.R. WATERFRONT COALITION



NEIGHBOHOOD CONTEXT: WHERE WE ARE WORKING



VISIONING PROCESS

As a result of EDC's plan, several community organizations came together to form the OUR Waterfront Coalition and developed a visioning process to allow for wide scale participation of the community most affected by development on the East River waterfront. The visioning process, which occurred over the last year, included the following components:

800 surveys, conducted with community members in the Lower East Side and Chinatown between July and November of 2008

OUR Waterfront community-based association represents Lower East Side and Chinatown residents organizing to make a difference along the East River waterfront. We must be central to the process for the management of the waterfront.

Gender: ☐ M ☐ F ☐ YOTS

Age: _____

Zip Code where you live: _____

Race/Ethnicity:

☐ Asian

☐ Latino/Hispanic

☐ Black/African-American

☐ White

Mixed Race: _____ (please specify)

What is your annual household income level?

☐ \$10,000 or less ☐ \$50,001-\$60,000

☐ \$10,001-\$20,000 ☐ \$60,001-\$70,000

☐ \$20,001-\$30,000 ☐ more than \$70,000

What is your primary language?

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Chinese

Other: _____ (please specify)

What is your relationship to the East River Waterfront and the Chinatown and Lower East Side communities? Please check all that apply.

☐ I live in the area

☐ I work in the area

☐ I have a business in the area

☐ I go to school in the area

Other: _____ (please specify)

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

A town hall meeting with 100 participants and elected officials to review and vote on 3 different design options for the waterfront



Review of EDC contracts and financial information

Three visioning sessions with 150 participants, hosted by five different community organizations



A Financial analysis and Business plan was completed by The Pratt Center for Community Development, based on the community's vision of the development of the East River Waterfront





O.U.R. Waterfront Visioning Sessions



FINDINGS FROM THE VISIONING: WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

This report, “The People’s Plan” lays out the results of this comprehensive visioning process and highlights the differences between the community’s vision for the development of the waterfront and the plans of the NYC Economic Development Corporation. The following are the research findings on which the people’s plan is based.

Finding 1 Free and Low-Cost Services

Residents of the Lower East Side and Chinatown want the East River Development project to prioritize free and low-cost services businesses and retail.

In explaining the need for free and low-cost services, one survey participant said,

“Living in America gives us a lot of pressure, we need a place to relax and have fun.”

71% of survey respondents indicated that they did not want any business to be part of the development. Rather, the community prioritized the following free services:



Finding 2 Cultural Diversity

Residents want programs, services and businesses that reflect and will preserve the rich cultural diversity of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Throughout the surveys and visioning sessions, residents strongly indicated they wanted space for local and accessible community art and cultural space, such as street murals, free moving screenings, and other public art. One resident commented on wanting to see more local, public art by saying,

"When I was growing up there were a lot of street murals. It would be great to bring that back. This waterfront should stress the unique character of this community and not just be another Upper West Side Riverside Park imitation."

Residents also prioritized food and retail vendors that reflect the cultural diversity of the community.

Finding 3 Health and Quality of Life

Residents want services, programs and businesses that will improve the health and quality of life of residents.

Residents explained that social services are a necessary component of the development of the waterfront because there is such a high need for such services in the community. Participants wanted a variety of services to be available through a multi-use community center, including: health services, assistance with translation, language classes, and eviction prevention and other case management. In addition, residents expressed a desire to see vendors and small businesses that sell healthy and fresh food.

"We want services to better help us understand what is happening in our community; we want interpretation services if we can't read letters or fill out forms."

Finding 4 Low-cost Businesses

Although free services are preferred, residents also want low-cost businesses as their neighborhood becomes increasingly unaffordable.

"A recreation center is needed, especially for teens. They can be an alternative to gangs."

As gentrification increases, it is important to residents that new businesses along the waterfront be both locally owned and affordable to the neighborhood. Survey respondents indicated that they prefer the following businesses as part of the development:



Finding 5 No High-end Development

Community residents DO NOT want high-end retail or commercial development on the East River Waterfront.

Most respondents and visioning participants felt that big, brand name (“big box”) stores have no place on the waterfront. They also explained that high-end retail stores would speed up the process of gentrification that is already displacing long-time residents and making the neighborhood unaffordable and unlivable.

As one visioning participant says

“We need fewer franchises and more mom and pop shops so small businesses aren’t displaced”

Finding 7 Community Power in Decision Making

Residents feel that they have limited ability to give input to and participate in making decisions about the City’s development plans for the waterfront.

Many people expressed the feeling that the city was not taking into account the voices and the needs of the communities who live closest to the waterfront, saying,

Instead they feel that the city is trying to target the development of the waterfront towards tourists and other New Yorkers who don’t live in the neighborhood.

“The city is not considering what the people that live in the area want and are concerned about.”

Finding 6 Concerns

While development of the ERW has much potential and shows promise, many residents still have serious concerns about affordability, accessibility and safety.

The predominant concerns shared by community residents about the development of the East River Waterfront include gentrification and displacement of long time residents, lack of affordability, lack of community input in the development process and the safety of the community. A visioning participant says,

“Increased gentrification and displacement are my main concerns. We already have people who come in here and if they build luxury on the waterfront we will be displaced because high-end people feel entitled to take over the neighborhood. We would lose cultural diversity in the neighborhood and have nowhere to go, because nowhere in the city is affordable anymore.”

Residents have very real concerns about safety as well. Participants at the visioning workshops were concerned about police harassment of low-income people.

THE PEOPLE'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Based on the findings from the visioning process, the OUR Waterfront Coalition has drawn up three different options for how the East River Waterfront could be developed. Option 3, which is outlined below, won support of an overwhelming majority of those attending the O.U.R. Waterfront town hall meeting.

A Greenway

Shared running path/bikeway that connects to East River Park

B River Pool

An urban amenity that filters river water to form a pool for local residents to swim in. The river pool could double as an environmental classroom and a community swimming pool that residents of all incomes could utilize.

C Multi-use courts

Because of the need for free or low-cost recreation areas, courts that could be used for basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc, should be constructed.

D Community Center

The sanitation shed on Pier 36 would be repurposed into smaller buildings two of them would house a multi-use community center, complete with offices for local nonprofits, educational programs, job training programs, translation services and other community-appropriate activities.

E Flexible Open Spaces

These spaces could be an area for a farmers' market to sell low-cost, healthy foods, be used for performances or other large gatherings

F Inlet with Direct water access

via "get-downs" for fishing, kayaking, and other water sports, as well as a running path that would connect to the northern East River Park.

G Space for environmental education or community gardens

In keeping with the focus on open space, this area would provide a forum for community residents to interact with each other and their surroundings on the waterfront.

H Park maintenance bldg and Restrooms

I Pier 35 would remain as EDC's current development plan

Mostly open space; landscaped with grass, seating areas, and "get-downs" to the waterfront.



How a community park can be built for \$55,133,369



Cost of EDC vs. People's Plans

The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation has allocated \$138 million in capital budget alone for its East River Waterfront Project. As of June 2009, the EDC had spent \$38.5 million of those funds. In contrast, the People's Plan's total capital budget and operating costs for one year stands at \$55,133,369. That's a difference of \$82,866,631 – meaning that the difference between the two budgets is more than the entirety of the People's Plan's allocation for both capital and operating expenses.

THE NYCEDC PLAN VS. THE PEOPLE'S PLAN

The chart below compares the main components, costs and processes of the EDC and the People's Plan and highlights the differences between the two.

	EDC's Original Plan	People's Plan	Shortfalls and What's Missing from EDC's Plans
Total Capital Budget	\$138,000,000 (LMDC Funds for Development of Community Uses)	\$52,031,369	→ EDC plan will cost \$85,968,631 more than People's Plan
Pier 42	Reinforcement of the pier and demolition of the pier's existing structures to make way for Temporary commercial space	The shed on Pier 42 would be demolished and open space with ball courts and playgrounds would be created in its place	→ No community center → No space for social services or free recreation
Pier 35	Combination educational space and restaurant	Open grassy area	→ EDC has revised plans to make pier 35 entirely open, green space → This would adhere to the People's Plan
Pier 36 / Basketball City	Basketball City, the for-profit, privately owned gym will be the focal point of the redeveloped pier	Most of the shed on Pier 36 would be demolished, but parts of it would be transformed into a multi-purpose community center. Open plazas for farmers' markets and vendors' carts would also be created	→ The EDC calls for an expensive gym → The People's Plan prioritizes low or no cost services and programs
Process to Develop Plan	The EDC's planning has taken place without community input or approval. The city's official plan for the waterfront does not reflect residents' needs and priorities	The OUR Waterfront coalition distributed 800 surveys to community members, conducted three visioning sessions, held a town hall meeting, and completed a financial analysis based on the community's vision	The EDC... → Has prioritized high-end commercial development over community uses → Has not gathered information on what residents would like to see on their own waterfront → Has not provided a forum for community voices to be heard

O.U.R WATERFRONT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

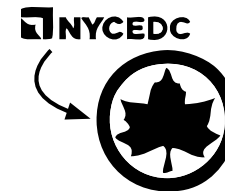
Based on the above findings from the visioning process, the OUR Waterfront Coalition recommends that the NYC EDC, Mayor Bloomberg and City Council make the following policy changes:

Overall Recommendation

- EDC and the Mayor should implement the People's Plan for development of the East River Waterfront.

Management and Governance

- All public and community space that is developed along the east river waterfront, including on piers 42, 35, and 36, should be managed by a partnership between a Non-Profit a Local Development Corporation (LDC) and the NYC department of Parks and Recreation.



Transparency, Accountability and Community Input

- All RFP's for the development of the Piers should be based on the information and results from the community's visioning process that are documented in the People's Plan.
- All spending related to the waterfront should be transparent and information should be publicly available.
- The city should allocate more funding to Community Boards specifically for Board members and staff to conduct outreach to individuals and groups in the community to develop a comprehensive and collective response to development plans.

Funding and Commercial Uses

- Funds allocated from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) for the development of the East River waterfront should be used to build a community and recreation center on Pier 42 or Pier 36.
- All commercial uses on the piers should be consistent with the community's preference and should include only small businesses with low-cost goods and not high-end, large-scale commercial projects.

Basketball City

- EDC should modify its lease with basketball city to include all the provisions outlined in a community benefits agreement between Basketball City, Inc. and the community.
- EDC should examine projected profits of Basketball City to determine how a portion of these profits could be utilized to support the maintenance and operation of community uses on the waterfront.
- A Pier 36 oversight Advisory Board, composed of representatives from private and public tenant associations, community based organizations, and Community Board 3 should be established to monitor and oversee a community benefits agreement between Basketball city and the above mentioned community entities.

A PEOPLE'S PLAN

FOR THE EAST RIVER WATERFRONT

About the Authors: Organizing and Uniting Residents (O.U.R.) Waterfront is a coalition of community-based organizations and tenant associations representing residents of the Lower East Side and Chinatown, including: CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities, the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project (UJC), Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES), Hester Street Collaborative, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council and University Settlement. These groups are a mixture of membership-led community organizing groups, social service providers, and other resource allies that are based in or work with groups in the Lower East Side and Chinatown.

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