



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

February 28, 2019

Hon. Melisa Lago, Chair
Department of City Planning
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Hon. Thomas Fariello, RA, Acting Commissioner
New York City Department of Buildings
280 Broadway, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Resolution supporting Enhanced Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines

Dear Chair Lago:

Please be advised that Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed a resolution with 38 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 0 not voting, at its Tuesday, February 26, 2019, General Meeting, supporting the use of enhanced planning and design standards, such as WEDG, for waterfront development projects in the Manhattan Community District 12 and urging the Department of City Planning and the Department of Buildings to update the Zoning Resolution and Building Code to incorporate best practices that maximize resiliency considerations in the planning, design and construction of waterfront developments.

WHEREAS: According to a 2015 report prepared by the NYC Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, sea levels are rising across the globe, and will continue to increase the extent, frequency, and duration of storms and coastal flooding. These risks come with increasing costs, both event-based and day-to-day. Hurricane Sandy has cost New York City \$19 billion to-date, and flood insurance rates continue to rise; and

WHEREAS: The RAND Corporation's 2017 "Rising Flood Insurance Costs a Growing Burden to Communities and Homeowners in New York City" report states that by 2050, NYC's average temperature is expected to rise between 4.1 and 6.6°F, and annual precipitation is expected to increase between 4% and 13%, which could exacerbate sea-level rise. Dangerous waves are also now 20 times more likely to overwhelm the Manhattan seawall than they were 170 years ago; and

WHEREAS: Despite these rapidly increasing risks and costs, new waterfront development is occurring at a rapid pace. Over 400,000 New Yorkers have a 50% chance of experiencing a major flood in

their homes by 2060, and over 41% of those are economically and socially vulnerable. The increasing density of waterfront development across the City calls for smart choices about how we prepare for storms through planning, design, and management of developments in the floodplain; and

WHEREAS: There are provisions in New York City's Zoning Resolution to permit certain regulations to be modified to allow flexibility the design of buildings located in areas that are sensitive to climate change (Article VI: Special Regulations Applicable to Certain Areas; Chapter 4 – Special Regulations Applying in Flood Hazard Areas). These zoning regulations are optional, but are in place to provide flexibility to accommodate NYC Building Code regulations that are required for flood-resistant construction, and also to accommodate planning for the future conditions; and

WHEREAS: Notwithstanding the provisions of the Zoning Resolution and the Building Code that address building in areas sensitive to climate change, it is important to explore and promote best practices in design, planning, and construction that exceed minimum standards and facilitate the creation of more sustainable and resilient waterfront developments; and

WHEREAS: One example of a standard that exceeds minimum regulatory requirements is the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines or WEDG®, a tool created by the Waterfront Alliance that can equip stakeholders such as community residents, architects, builders, and decision-makers to make more informed decisions on smart design, coastal resiliency, and improved access to the waterfront. WEDG is not intended to replace zoning or the building code but rather to provide guidance for exceeding zoning and building code requirements in order to enhance resilience, ecology, and access in waterfront development; and

WHEREAS: WEDG has received awards from the American Planning Association and the American Society of Civil Engineers, among others. There are eight WEDG Certified projects in New York City including Greenpoint Landing, Domino Sugar, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and Sunset Park Materials Recovery Facility in Brooklyn; Hunters Point South in Queens; Starlight Park and Oak Point/McInnis Cement in the Bronx; and Sandy Hook Pilots Association in Staten Island; and

WHEREAS: Community Boards are on the forefront of reviewing major projects as well as planning and zoning initiatives and can play an important role to hold waterfront development to higher standards, improve land use decisions, and help citizens advocate for more resilient, equitable waterfront development in their communities. Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: Manhattan Community Board 12 supports the use of enhanced planning and design standards, such as WEDG, for waterfront development projects in the Manhattan Community District 12 and citywide and urge the Department of City Planning and the Department of Buildings to

update the Zoning Resolution and Building Code to incorporate best practices that maximize resiliency considerations in the planning, design and construction of waterfront developments.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Lewis
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Scott Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator

Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Chris Ward, Waterfront Alliance Chair

Handwritten signature or initials.