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Waterfront Alliance Releases WEDG, A Nationally Applicable Standard for Excellence in Waterfront Design

Award-winning resilient design program based in New York City now offers transformative tool for coastal communities across the United States

New York, NY—Recognizing an urgent, widespread need for guidance in waterfront design in an era of increasing coastal urbanization, climate change, and ecological degradation, the [Waterfront Alliance](#) today is releasing a nationally applicable version of its [WEDG®](#) (Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines) program. Consulted thousands of times since the release of its first version in 2015, the [award-winning](#) and user-friendly WEDG is a credit system and set of guidelines for catalyzing resilient, accessible, and ecologically sound waterfront design. WEDG aims to do for waterfronts what LEED® has done for buildings: elevate process and practice through certification, education, and engagement.

Complex networks of ecosystems, regulatory jurisdictions, and stakeholder groups challenge even the most seasoned waterfront design professionals, increasingly more so as sea levels continue to rise. For local communities, this complexity can be a barrier to having a voice in decisions that affect people's daily lives and well-being. For this reason—and with help from hundreds of experts in design, science, community development, engineering, and insurance—the Waterfront Alliance developed WEDG to influence decision-making and support better outcomes for all.

A free and open-source tool developed for end-users with a wide range of perspectives, WEDG is a:

- **Credit-based rating system** for informing and evaluating the value of design decisions for waterfront projects
- **Set of guidelines** leading users toward the right solutions for their project and context
- **Communication tool** that serves as a common reference to define excellence, used by professionals, landowners, communities, and government agencies
- **Advocacy tool** for higher design standards

Using the guidelines as a framework, the Waterfront Alliance's WEDG program administers project review, professional education, and community engagement, with the aim of improving projects to reduce risk, streamline permitting review, and foster relationships between landowners and community members.

Providing practical guidance for excellence in waterfront design for developers, community members, and design professionals, WEDG facilitates positive outcomes on private and public lands. In the New York metropolitan area, WEDG-certified projects include [Brooklyn Bridge Park](#), [Domino Sugar](#), [Greenpoint Landing](#), [Hunters Point South](#), [Sandy Hook Pilots Association](#), [Starlight Park](#), and [Sunset Park Materials Recycling Facility](#). In 2018, the Waterfront Alliance plans to develop partnerships in cities including Boston and the Camden/Philadelphia region as the program grows its network and scope.

“As the Chairman of the Waterfront Alliance, I am proud of the achievement of this national version of WEDG and grateful for the tireless work that made it happen” said **Chris Ward, Senior Vice President and Chief Executive, AECOM**. “In my day job at AECOM as a member of the professional engineering, design, and planning community, I see coastal cities across the nation that need the technical guidance for resiliency that WEDG so clearly and comprehensively provides. In our age of climate change, WEDG is the right tool at the right time.”

“Climate change, sea level rise, and coastal flooding are global challenges that are here to stay. We need the best data, inspirations, and tools that help guide communities, government, developers...everybody... to build and rebuild shorelines that protect us from the next storm and enhance our quality of life when the sun shines. WEDG is part of that toolkit. Any wise waterfront stakeholder will employ it,” said **Henk Ovink, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs, Kingdom of The Netherlands**.

“100 Resilient Cities is thrilled to have partnered with the Waterfront Alliance to help create and promote WEDG, an exciting new tool to help cities adapt to the reality of our myriad challenges coastal communities face at the waterfront. Communities, government, and developers in our coastal cities need better options for their waterfronts. WEDG gives them strong guidance to do so,” said **Otis Rolley, Regional Director for North America, 100 Resilient Cities**.

“The reality of climate change was highlighted for New Yorkers during Hurricane Sandy, leading to a massive citywide response to prepare our coastal communities and our entire city for what lies ahead,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, New York City’s Senior Director of Climate Policy and Programs and Chief Resilience Officer**. “Better waterfront design is critical to that effort and WEDG has been a valuable tool across New York Harbor. Congratulations to the Waterfront Alliance for expanding this effort across the country and for showcasing New York City’s leadership on waterfront design in an era of climate change.”

“As our coasts face increasing risks, properties and communities need to be designed to the highest standard and for long-term resilience. Resources like WEDG are important because they provide guidelines for risk reduction and help to address changing hazards” said **Dr. Louis Gritz, Vice President of Research, FM Global**.

“The Waterfront Alliance exhibited leadership by identifying the need and gap in the market for a rating system or framework focused on waterfront sites. WEDG is a very useful tool for cities to realize the economic potential of their waterfronts, and for developers looking to integrate equity, resilience, ecology, and access into waterfront projects” said **Katharine Burgess, Senior Director of Urban Resilience at the Urban Land Institute**.

“Whether during Hurricane Sandy, or this winter’s ferocious nor’easters, Boston and New York share the common risks of addressing coastal flood risk in thriving urban areas. We are excited to work with the Waterfront Alliance to expand opportunities for professionals and other stakeholders working around Boston Harbor to use WEDG to improve resilience, provide public access, and improve urban ecosystems” said **Kathy Abbott, President and CEO, Boston Harbor Now**.

“We all want livable and resilient cities that will thrive for generations to come,” said **Kris Kolluri, CEO of Cooper’s Ferry Partnership**. “We look forward to using WEDG with our community of partners here in the Camden-Philadelphia region, in support of our development of a resilient, accessible, and ecologically-sound waterfront for all.”

“Waterfront Alliance and the WEDG Program have partnered with the Bronx YMCA to expand connections between people, our water safety programs, and our neighborhood waterfront. We were proud to work with them to bring our local community onto the water to become advocates for our shoreline, which boasts a substantial, but largely undiscovered, natural oyster reef. Our waterfront will be undergoing a wetlands restoration and public access development over the next year, and WEDG has helped us to consider how we expand opportunities for environmental education and recreation,” said **Sharlene Brown, Executive Director of the Bronx YMCA.**

“Climate change is already reshaping the design and function of our nation’s waterfront edges. The WEDG guidelines provide an actionable and flexible tool for practitioners, landowners, and communities alike to communicate and support the quality and future adaptability of their waterfront projects,” said **Kate Orff, Founder and Principal of SCAPE.**

“How, where, and what we build at the water’s edge are open questions with profound consequences for us now and generations to come,” said **Waterfront Alliance President and CEO Roland Lewis.** “As people around the country flock to the waterfront to live, work, and play, they are faced with a host of challenges, from flooding concerns to public access. WEDG, a free program, can educate professionals and engage and support community groups. It is our aim to not only influence individual projects, but shift the entire field of waterfront design toward a better balance of resilience, ecology, and access.”

Media are invited to attend the launch party on March 13, 6pm to 7:30pm, at Empire Stores (DUMBO), 55 Water Street, Brooklyn. [Details here.](#)

Waterfront Alliance received philanthropic support from The Rockefeller Foundation, The New York Community Trust, and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to develop this version of WEDG.

The [Waterfront Alliance](#) works to protect, transform, and revitalize our harbor and waterfront.

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