East Side Coastal Resiliency Project Receives “Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines” Verification from Waterfront Alliance

(Long Island City, NY – November 10, 2022) NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Commissioner Thomas Foley announced today that the East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) project, which is enhancing parks while creating a 2.4-mile long flexible flood barrier extending from Montgomery Street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side up to Asser Levy Playground at East 25th Street, has been selected to receive “Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines” (WEDG®) Verification from the Waterfront Alliance.

The East Side Coastal Resiliency project uses a series of berms, flood walls, flood gates and raised parklands to create a continuous 2.4-mile barrier to protect 110,000 residents of the Lower East Side in Manhattan from future coastal and tidal flooding.

ESCR is a $1.45 billion climate resiliency project that will provide flood protection and improve open spaces for more than 110,000 New Yorkers, including 28,000 residents in NYCHA housing. This is a significant improvement for neighborhoods in the ESCR project area that were severely impacted by...
Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Managed by DDC, the project involves significant upgrades to public open spaces and five parks, including improved waterfront access through reconstructed bridges and entry points. It will also upgrade existing sewer systems to capture and manage precipitation during storms.

Construction of ESCR began near Stuyvesant Cove Park in November 2020. In July, the City announced the reopening of Asser Levy Playground along with a new 45-ton sliding floodgate. The entire project, which is being done in phases to keep park areas open for use by area residents during construction, will be completed in 2026.

“As we continue to expand coastal resiliency throughout NYC, it’s important we incorporate designs that highlight sustainable and eco-friendly elements,” said Deputy Mayor of Operations Meera Joshi. “It’s an incredible achievement to DDC and ESCR to receive WEDG verification and demonstrates how to incorporate innovative green design into resiliency projects.”

“The East Side Coastal Resiliency project is recognized all over the world and DDC is honored that the project has received “Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines” Verification,” said NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Commissioner Thomas Foley. “The City is building for the future and incorporates designs that will account for climate change and works with sponsor agencies to improve infrastructure for vulnerable communities. Thank you to the Waterfront Alliance for recognizing this project’s design and its’ role in providing flood protection and recreational areas for 110,000 New Yorkers in the Lower East Side.”

“We congratulate the City of New York in achieving WEDG® Verification for its East Side Coastal Resiliency Project,” said Waterfront Alliance President and CEO Cortney Koenig Worrall. “The rigor and transparency of the WEDG® process means that the highest standards of resilience, access and ecologically sound waterfront design have been applied to this consequential project. WEDG® inspires innovation and recognizes projects that go beyond what is minimally required. As the City takes on new infrastructure projects to adapt to the changing climate, those responsible for planning and execution, as well as local communities, will rely on resources like WEDG®. Together, we will transform the urban landscape to meet climate change head on.”

The Waterfront Alliance became an independent organization in 2007 when a group of leading activists, businesses, foundations, and civic organizations came together with the goal of making the New York and New Jersey harbor a shared, resilient, and accessible resource for all. The Waterfront Alliance has grown into a coalition of more than 1,100 organizations working together to bring about real change to the region’s waterways and 700 miles of shoreline.

The Waterfront Alliance created the WEDG® rating system that recognizes developers and landowners for resilient, sustainable, and accessible waterfront projects. WEDG® provides guidance and establishes design standards across six categories tailored to the complexities of waterfront development including site assessment and planning, responsible siting and costal risk reduction, community access and connections, edge resilience, natural resources, and innovation. WEDG® Verification is only awarded for projects that successfully pass a technical review of the project’s design against the WEDG® standards. Each project is assessed by engineers, landscape architects, and other professionals coordinated by Waterfront Alliance.
ESCR was cited by the Waterfront Alliance for many features including the project’s ability to reduce risk from coastal hazards, emergency preparedness plan, community engagement, quality of public access areas, waterfront greenway connectivity, and inventive design.

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About the NYC Department of Design and Construction
The Department of Design and Construction is the City’s primary capital construction project manager. In supporting Mayor Adams’ long-term vision of growth, sustainability, resiliency, equity and healthy living, DDC provides communities with new or renovated public buildings such as firehouses, libraries, police precincts, and new or upgraded roads, sewers and water mains in all five boroughs. To manage this $15.5 billion portfolio, DDC partners with other City agencies, architects and consultants, whose experience bring efficient, innovative and environmentally conscious design and construction strategies to City projects. For more information, please visit nyc.gov/ddc.

About the Waterfront Alliance
For 15 years, the Waterfront Alliance has served as a preeminent advocate for coastal resilience, waterfront access, and the working waterfront. Our mission is to inspire and effect resilient, revitalized, and accessible coastlines for all communities. We do this through a coalition of more than 1,100 organizations working together to bring about real change to waterways and coastlines, including support for systemic, equity-driven change for the most climate-vulnerable communities.