

Your City, Your Water NYC

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Environmental and water groups prepare for new administration

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When Roland Lewis kicked off the [Talking Transition](#) event about New York's waterfront in late November, he stressed its importance for the city's incoming new government.

"I truly believe what we do with this harbor is probably one of the most important, if not the most important, issue, the next mayor must face," said Lewis, the president and CEO of the [Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance](#).

As Bill de Blasio prepares to take over as the city's mayor this coming January, local environmental and water-related organizations are also getting ready to make sure these issues are a priority for him and other new officials.

The Nov. 21 Talking Transition event was an example of such a push. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of over 700 local organizations with ties to the region's waterways, organized the event [to discuss its Waterfront Platform](#). The platform calls on the new government to commit to a five-pronged approach to improving the city's waterfront.

"We envision a future with convenient ferry transit, a resilient waterfront design, multi-use waterfront docks, an active maritime industry and an NYC Department of the Waterfront," the platform states.

The alliance put together the platform in the days following super storm Sandy last year, and it has been pushing it to candidates throughout the election. In April, the alliance [hosted a forum](#) on waterfront issues, in which several mayoral candidates—including de Blasio—participated. It also issued a [Voter's Guide](#) after posing questions to candidates.

"The most pressing waterfront issue for our City is climate change," de Blasio stated in the guide. "As Mayor, I will ensure we invest in the necessary infrastructure changes to make our waterfront resilient, sustainable, and accessible."

Yet water advocates noted that plans can only go so far without financial support. "In any plan, policy is great but we need the funding to back the policies," said Tara DePorte, founder and executive director of [Human Impacts Institute](#), which is also part of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. "The hardest task of all is when we do develop these plans, that there is a budget to back it up."

In addition to its work with coalitions like the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance and [Bag It NYC](#), which supports tighter restrictions on the distribution of plastic bags, DePorte said the Human Impacts Institute is focusing on water quality issues, access to waterways and improving labeling for cleaning supplies.

The important part, DePorte said, is "keeping in mind that a healthy environment leads to healthy and strong communities."

Lewis said in a phone interview that the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's leaders are working to make sure the ideas they discussed with newly-elected officials are made into policy.

"We hope some of the work we've done in the last year has infected the dialogue," Lewis said.

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