

IMPLEMENTATION

MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

This vision for Water Street proposes broad integrated changes in the physical environment to sustain the success of Lower Manhattan's key commercial corridor. The character of the Water Street subdistrict calls for ambitious and holistic intervention across each facet of the physical environment.

The transformation of Water Street can start today, and is wholly achievable by 2020. It will require the support, resources and coordination of many public and private partners. The following recommendations outline next steps while remaining focused on achievement of the complete vision, comprising these four basic elements:

- Rescale the street to create an iconic boulevard
- Strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront
- Realign public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life
- Extend the hours of activity along Water Street



Aerial view of proposed vision for a new Water Street

The transformation of Water Street can start now, and is wholly achievable by 2020.



2010

2015

2020

- Re-stripe roadway with temporary materials
- Replace trees where needed
- Install pilot plaza at Whitehall St
- Provide info kiosk at gateways
- Enhance signage and wayfinding

- Close Front Street for lunch time programming
- Test street closures at Wall Street

- Amend zoning regulations and standardize design review

- Schedule events and installations
- Install Wifi and smart street services

- De-map southbound lane at Whitehall and start design of Water Street Reconstruction

- Complete comprehensive design for Mannahatta Park

- Attract and incentivize new retail
- Encourage capital investment in POPS/Arcades

- Develop and install curated art and events program
- Install east-west reflector lights

- Relocate obstructions to allow continuous soil beds and plant street trees

- Reconstruct Mannahatta Park

- Continue capital investment in POPS/Arcades

- Install Alliance light poles on east side of street and landscape lighting where possible

- Construct permanent landscaped median
- Construct sidewalk extension on west side
- Install neckdowns

- Complete lighting installation

Potential timeline for implementation of recommendations

ANCHOR TO ANCHOR: Rescale the street to create a distinctive boulevard

The reconstruction of Water Street included in the NYCDOT capital plan creates an opportunity to implement the reconfiguration proposed in this report. While available funding will only provide for in-kind replacement of the existing street, additional funds should be allocated to initiate a thorough transformation including relocation of utilities to accommodate new sidewalk tree pits and planting, extension of curb line and build-out of a landscaped median. All measures taken together have the potential to achieve the vision of a distinct urban boulevard.



Recommendations:

- 1. Implement temporary interventions to demonstrate the benefits of street reconfiguration.**
 - The success of DOT's temporary plaza program demonstrates that interim and cost-effective interventions can bring tangible change while setting the stage for permanent reconstruction when funding becomes available. This strategy could be implemented on Water Street by:
 - Restriping the roadway to limit moving traffic to one lane in each direction
 - Using temporary materials to create a median, turning bays, sidewalk extensions and neck downs
 - Painting 'Sharrow' lane markings that alert drivers to the presence of bicycles in the new, widened traffic lane
 - Planting new trees where possible with the existing installation standards
- 2. Make improvements to the southern gateway of Water Street:**
 - Pilot a new public plaza at Whitehall Street with temporary interventions beginning immediately
 - Begin efforts to de-map the southbound slip lane at Water Street and Whitehall to allow the creation of a permanent plaza with opportunity for seating, shade and an outdoor food concession
 - Leverage improvements to Peter Minit Plaza and pavilion to encourage pedestrian activity on Water Street 3.
- 3. Define the northern gateway of Water Street:**
 - Augment the redesign under way in public parks at Fulton and Water Street
 - Consider opportunities to use lighting and public art in the plaza at 200 Water Street
 - Establish a Downtown information kiosk at the corner of Fulton and Water
- 4. Enhance signage and wayfinding to acknowledge proximity to destinations and transit.**

Augmenting existing signage to improve connections between Water Street and the rest of Lower Manhattan.
- 5. Expand the scope of the street reconstruction to include all elements reviewed in the vision plan.**
 - Utilize existing Federal Highway Administration capital funding for street reconstruction to provide in-kind replacement and street design enhancements.
 - Implement a single widened moving lane and one parking lane in each direction
 - Construct a permanent landscaped median with locations for permanent public art and left turning bays
 - Construct a sidewalk extension with amenity zone along the west side of Water Street
 - Utilize sidewalk neck downs wherever possible to reduce pedestrian exposure at intersections
 - Relocate obstructions during street reconstruction to allow for continuous soil beds for street trees
 - Install pedestrian-friendly lighting along with new roadbed light poles and complete corridor-wide Wi-Fi

WATER TO WATER:

Improve east-west pathways to strengthen connections to the historic core and waterfront

Pedestrian activity on Water Street is dominated by several key intersections. Workers, residents and visitors tend to travel east-west to and from the Financial District or the water's edge, rather than along Water Street. Harnessing this condition by improving the experience at major crossings can create strong linkages between Water Street and the historic core and waterfront and will better integrate the corridor into surrounding areas.



Recommendations:

- 1. Expand Mannahatta Park, allowing for large, programmable open space.**
 - Design queues along with both temporary and permanent barriers can delimit Wall Street to emergency vehicles, while maintaining full vehicle access through Front Street.
 - Test the concept of an enlivened Wall Street destination with weekend and off-hour street closures and incremental reprogramming of parking lanes
 - Redefine the space through a comprehensive design effort centered on the opportunities for place-making through landscape, trees, street furniture, fountains, art and programming
 - Bring a material and design palette that complements recent security zone improvements on Wall Street while aligning pedestrians toward the views and experience of the East River Esplanade
- 2. Bring the Million Trees NYC initiative to green the street, plazas and parks.**
 - Differentiate species selected for planting on side streets from those planted on Water Street to optimize views to the river and appropriate fit for available sunlight and drainage conditions. Focus efforts on cross streets with the highest pedestrian volume including Fulton Street, Wall Street and Whitehall Street. Enhance existing and new public spaces with shade trees and landscape.
- 3. Enliven Front Street with weekend closings and regular programming.**
 - Make Front Street a lunchtime destination of choice with gourmet food trucks, regular programming and after-work events
- 4. Support links to the East River Esplanade with communal bicycle facilities.**
 - Consider locations for construction of a secure bike parking facility along Front Street with access to the East River Esplanade and Piers.
 - Support property owners in achieving compliance with bike access regulations.

SPACE TO PLACE: Repurpose public and ground-floor spaces to enhance street life

The 41 POPS concentrated on the 10 blocks of Water Street siphon off pedestrian activity, making the street feel empty and thwarting retail and restaurant uses. Corridor-wide standards that encourage private investment, streamline the approval process and incentivize action are essential to activate and enliven the street.

Recommendations:

- 1. Rethink the existing zoning for Water Street's outdated and unsuccessful POPS and arcades.**
 - Regulatory reform can be tailored to address the specific conditions of the study area while balancing public and private benefits. Potential approaches to achieve a better public realm may include any of the following:
 - Amend the zoning map to designate a special use district coincident with the study area and define a set of considerations and design guidelines for POPS unique to the district
 - Create a catalogue of reasonable and achievable best practices to address non-compliance in plaza and arcade design
 - Create an efficient and predictable process of review for POPS and arcade modification
 - Allow installation of movable tables, chairs and shade umbrellas in POPS and arcades as-of-right
 - Designate Water Street as a 'Retail Street' in the Lower Manhattan Special Purpose District
- 2. Overcome barriers to capital investment:**
 - Provide tax abatement for capital expenditure on additions and renovation accommodating new retail
 - Expedite permitting and conversion of existing ground-floor space at blank walls and large lobbies to active retail space
- 3. Attract and incentivize new retail tenants.**
 - Achieving an attractive retail identity that both extends and enhances street life will require incentives for early movers to raise the density and mix of active businesses.
 - Develop policy guidelines or zoning reform to promote active retail frontage
 - Provide signing bonus or employment tax credit for new retail establishments on Water Street



DAY TO NIGHT:

Extend the hours of activity to engage daytime, evening and weekend populations.

Programming on Water Street should activate a network of newly redesigned public spaces along the street. Art and events for Water Street should capitalize on existing hot spots in the surrounding area, drawing people from transportation hubs, Stone Street and Wall Street. Creative, professionally produced programming with opportunities for active and passive participation will build a sense of community, loyalty and investment in the future of Water Street.

Recommendations:

1. Activate Water Street with programming that appeals to employees, residents, and tourists alike.

- Schedule daily, weekly and seasonal events and installations to activate spaces throughout the year
- Position live events in advantageous locations to draw on and amplify the success of existing activity resonating from the waterfront, historic streets, and popular restaurants
- Partner with adjacent and district-wide businesses to attract customers through promotion and sponsorship
- Capture public attention and acclaim through innovative events that blend public space with active and passive engagement in technology, arts, music and performance

2. Bring iconic public art to gateway locations and public spaces.

- Enliven the street from one end to the other with curated, site-specific visual art that takes advantage of the rich variety of architectural and spatial opportunities
- Develop a sophisticated architectural lighting program with potential to draw public and critical appeal
- Curate site-specific art installations at strategic locations to enhance view corridors and transform the spatial experience of the street

3. Install pedestrian-friendly indirect lighting through street reconstruction funding.

- Make the experience of working, living, and shopping on Water Street an attractive one for existing and potential office, residential, and retail tenants
- Install Downtown Alliance standard pole-mounted lighting for the vehicle right of way
- Highlight parks and plazas with soft indirect lighting in pockets of landscape and street trees

4. Transform Water Street into the smartest street in New York City.

- Provide publicly accessible Wi-Fi with coverage in all open spaces and retail locations
- Install Next Bus intelligent route signage
- Leverage existing Downtown Alliance social and mobile media to drive traffic to local shopping dining and entertainment destinations



OVERVIEW MAP



FULL SIZE MAP AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AT WWW.DOWNTOWNNY.COM/WATERSTREET

The mission of the Alliance for Downtown New York is to be the principal organization that provides Lower Manhattan's historic financial district with a premier physical and economic environment, advocates for businesses and property owners and promotes the area as a world-class destination for companies, workers, residents and visitors. The Downtown Alliance manages the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Business Improvement District (BID), serving an area roughly from City Hall to the Battery, from the East River to West Street.

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Resources

Further information regarding related best practices, policies and prior planning initiatives:

Active Design Guidelines, NYCDCC & NYCDHMH, 2010

Street Design Manual, NYCDOT, 2009

Water Street Study Existing Conditions, ADNY, 2008

PlaNYC, Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability, 2007

New York City's Vision for Lower Manhattan, Office of the Mayor, 2002

Downtown East River Waterfront Concept Plan, ADNY, 2002

The Lower Manhattan Plan, NYCDCP, 1966

To learn more about Water Street please visit:
www.downtownny.com/waterstreet

