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City and Staten Island Leaders Tour the First Mid-Island Bluebelt



\$25 Million Project in Midland Beach Included Removal of 475 Cubic Yards of Trash and Debris and Construction of New Wetlands to Filter Stormwater and Reduce Neighborhood Flooding

\$46 Million Phase 2, North of Hylan Boulevard, to Begin in the Spring

Photos, Diagrams and a Map of the Work Area are Available on DEP's Flickr Page

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Vincent Sapienza today joined with the Department of Design and Construction (DDC), Borough President James Oddo and Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo to tour the nearly completed \$25 million first phase of the New Creek Bluebelt. Located in the Midland Beach neighborhood, where roadway flooding often occurs during heavy rainstorms, the project includes the first two, of what will eventually be 19, Bluebelt wetlands that will receive and naturally filter the stormwater that falls in the area. The project was jointly funded by DEP and an \$11 million U.S. Department of Agriculture grant secured by Senator Charles Schumer. DDC managed the construction of the Bluebelt, which is anticipated to be completed on time, by the end the year. Also joining on the tour were the offices of Congressman Dan Donovan and Senator Andrew Lanza.

"We are very excited to be nearing completion on the first phase of the mid-Island Bluebelt system, which will significantly improve the area's drainage system, help to reduce flooding and provide some relief to Midland Beach residents," said **DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. "The 67 Bluebelt wetlands we have built and maintain on the Island's south shore have proven effective at managing stormwater and have even helped to raise nearby property values. We look

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forward to these wetlands doing the same for the mid-Island.”

“DDC is proud to work with our partners at the DEP to improve the resilience of the mid-island area and provide Staten Island residents with natural drainage enhancements for years to come,” said **DDC Acting Commissioner Ana Barrio**. “The Bluebelt system is a remarkable example of harnessing natural areas in a way that alleviates the need for costly traditional storm sewers, beautifying areas with thousands of new seedlings and creating new open space opportunities for borough residents.”

“Climate change will continue to make storms more frequent and flooding more intense across New York City’s five boroughs,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, NYC’s Senior Director for Climate Policy and Programs and Chief Resilience Officer**. “By investing in Staten Island’s Blue Belts, the City continues to demonstrate the kind of climate leadership that is necessary to make our communities safer from the impacts of climate change. Congratulations to DEP for its delivery of this important nature-based solution to address flooding, a critical part of the City’s OneNYC commitment to building a more sustainable and resilient city.”

“It is truly exciting to witness the near completion of the first phase of the New Creek Bluebelt,” said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. “For almost two decades we have been promising residents of Midland Beach that the Bluebelt is coming, and that it will help provide relief from some of the flooding that plagues this community. I understand that some residents have been skeptical that it would ever be built, but with the progress made in Phase 1, they should all be believers by now. It is special to see so many years of your hard work on behalf of your constituents on such an important issue begin to pay off. We know from experience the overwhelmingly positive effects of the Bluebelt on the South Shore, and we look forward to similar impacts in the Mid-Island.”

“Anyone who has lived along the East Shore has experienced an increased degree and frequency of flooding in their communities,” said **Council Member Steven Matteo**. “The new Bluebelt system will help us manage and mitigate this problem. This program is a smart use of Staten Island’s natural resources and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. I am extremely pleased with this investment in our borough, and that Phase 1 will be completed on time and on budget.”

The award winning Bluebelt program preserves natural drainage corridors such as streams and ponds, and optimizes them to help control and filter stormwater. During this first phase of the project, two new wetlands were built along with a new, west branch of New Creek. This includes a new 4.7-acre freshwater wetland between Nugent Avenue and Freeborn Street, and another .7-acre freshwater wetland between Freeborn Street and Olympia Boulevard. These wetlands slow the stormwater down after it empties from the sewer system and detains it, allowing it to be naturally filtered. The water then slowly flows over weirs and into the new west branch of New Creek. The stream has been built to a width of 32 feet and will run southeast through City-owned property that, in later phases of the project, will be developed into freshwater wetlands. Culverts have been built to allow the stream to pass under existing streets. Moving from upstream to downstream, the new water management system includes culverts under Freeborn Street, Olympia Boulevard, and Graham Boulevard, before meeting the main channel of New Creek near Slater Boulevard. Eventually, the system empties into lower New York Harbor. Prior to the project, much of this property was covered with Phragmites, or common reed grass, which is prone to brush fires. By removing the Phragmites and adding more diverse wetland plantings, the threat of brush fires has been reduced and the area will likely attract more wildlife. The work included the installation of 31,550 herbaceous plants, including wildflowers, 1,572 woody shrubs and 195 trees.

Over the last ten years, DEP has built Bluebelts for approximately one third of Staten Island’s land area. In the South Richmond and mid-Island areas, the City has purchased approximately 400 acres of wetland property for Bluebelts that provide drainage for 19 watersheds, covering about 14,000 acres. The Bluebelts also provide important open spaces and serve as a habitat for diverse wildlife.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

The Department of Design and Construction is the City's primary capital construction project manager. In supporting Mayor de Blasio's lenses of growth, sustainability, resiliency, equity and healthy living, DDC provides communities with new or renovated public buildings such as such as firehouses, libraries, police precincts, new or upgraded roadways, sewers, water mains in all five boroughs. To manage this \$15 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.

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