

East Midtown Greenway – East 53rd to East 61st Street (Formerly known as the ODR Esplanade for the temporary Outboard Detour Roadway constructed in the river during FDR repair work in the 2000's)

About the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway

The Manhattan Waterfront Greenway is a historic opportunity to create public open space in Manhattan. Following the city's rich history of investing in public parks, the greenway builds on years of advocacy and planning for both waterfront public space and safe bicycle infrastructure. The existing Manhattan Waterfront Greenway provides approximately 27.5 miles of shoreline pathway with additional on-road routes where shoreline paths weren't previously possible. The ultimate goal of the greenway is to provide protected access to the shoreline—for pedestrians, cyclists, and a variety of activities—integrating larger parks within a connected network along the entire perimeter of the island. The greenway is intended to transform underutilized waterfront into public open space for both recreational and commuting use. Once complete, the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway will connect over 1000 acres of open space and create new Greenway in areas historically cut off from the waterfront like eastern and northern Manhattan.

About the East Midtown Greenway

Despite progress to develop new waterfront public open space in New York City as stated above, a major gap exists in Midtown East. Cut off from the water by the FDR Drive, the communities of Midtown East have few connections to the waterfront. In recent years, a number of planning efforts have examined this issue, including efforts by Community Board 6 through a 197(a) plan, the Municipal Art Society, and the Department of City Planning, as well as efforts by the United Nations and the United Nations Development Corporation to explore the feasibility of a public waterfront esplanade. The East Midtown Waterfront Project was conceived from these efforts and addresses the gap between 38th Street and 61st Street along the East River. The EMG and Andrew Haswell Green Park Phase 2B will also connect greenway users to the rest of the recently improved Andrew Haswell Green Park to the north at East 61st Street.

The design for the EMG was informed by community engagement with an established Community Working Group representing local community boards, transportation and open-space advocates, and local residents. Community engagement for the EMG will continue through the final design process in close coordination with local community boards and other stakeholders. With this feedback in mind, NYCEDC, Parks, and DOT moved forward with designing an ADA-accessible bridge on 54th Street, which was determined to be the most viable location based on the area's topography and engineering and constructability constraints.

In April 2017, Mayor de Blasio committed capital funding for design and construction of the EMG, allowing construction to start for this segment in 2019. This section of East Midtown has long had few connections to the waterfront due to the presence of the FDR Drive, a steep landscape, and lack of waterfront real estate. A new 40-foot-wide esplanade will run over the water parallel to the FDR Drive, allowing pedestrians to experience water on both sides. The esplanade is being designed with resiliency in mind. The design for the EMG also embraces natural features, including a rock outcropping where oysters can still naturally thrive. A widened area near 53rd St. will provide additional space for environmental programming, including an outdoor classroom, educational signs, fishing, and other features that emphasize New Yorkers' connection to the waterfront. The greenway will also feature an art component created by an artist selected through a public process and with the community's input.

The EMG will be the first major gap filled since Riverwalk from W 83rd to W 91st Streets in 2010.

FAQs:

1. **Q: Where can I find updated information on this project online?**

A: EDC's website has a dedicated page titled East Midtown Waterfront and will provide regular updates to the page- <https://www.nycedc.com/project/east-midtown-waterfront>.

2. **Q: What streets does the project start and stop?**

A: The project limits of this portion of the East Midtown Greenway, originally referred to as the ODR Esplanade, are East 53rd to East 61st Street. In addition, the construction will be concurrent with the project from East 61st Street to East 62nd Street – Andrew Haswell Green Park Phase 2B.

3. **Q: Was an environmental assessment conducted? Where can I find this information, is it public?**

A: Yes, the environmental assessment was prepared in 2016 and can be found on our website on the [East Midtown Waterfront](#) project page.

4. **Q: What is happening with the UN Esplanade from East 41st to East 53rd Street?**

A: The City has completed the concept design, environmental review, and permitting in the event that this segment of the East Midtown Greenway project gets funding allocated to advance final design and final permitting. In 2012/13 the UN agreed in concept to the project location and scope inclusive of the security measures that would be in place. The project was to be funded through revenue generated from the consolidation of UN properties but that has not been completed. As of this time, the UN has still not determined whether to move forward with the Consolidation Building, but does not anticipate moving forward in the short term.

5. **Q: Since only the portion of the greenway from East 53rd to East 61st St is advancing at this time, are additional traffic studies required?**

A: The Environmental Assessment was prepared as part of the permitting process and included a traffic assessment that was reviewed by State and City DOT. At this time, no additional traffic studies are anticipated.

6. **Q: Given the high foot traffic the bridge at 54th Street will create, what precautions and measures has EDC taken to ensure the safety of the residents of Sutton Place and visitors?**

A: The Project team evaluated the 54th Street intersection and worked closely with DOT to evaluate appropriate improvements. This includes high visibility crosswalk markings, shortening crossing distance across Sutton Place South with neckdowns and optimizing signal timing. Additionally, measures have been incorporated into the bridge design such as regulatory & warning signage and rumble strips to slow bicyclists in order to improve safety.

7. **Q: Does the new greenway connect with the waterside public area along the FDR from 51st-54th St?**

A: This area is currently accessible only via stairs, access from the greenway to this area is not planned at this time.

8. Q: How does the design of the greenway incorporate resiliency measures? What height is the greenway being design to withstand concerns such as sea level rise?

A: The design follows the NYC ORR Preliminary Climate Resiliency Design Guidelines (“Guidelines”) to incorporate the expected future climate conditions, such as sea level rise, to increase the resiliency of the Greenway. Pursuant to the resiliency measures set forth by the City in the Guidelines, the design of EMG was reviewed using the anticipated sea level rise information published by the New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC). In 2015, the NPCC published official recommendations for sea level rise in the New York City metropolitan area. With a project design life of 75 years and anticipated construction completion in 2022, the proposed design assumes 36 inches of sea level rise, the median value from the NPCC (2100 projection, Middle range), in accordance with the Guidelines.

9. Q: What are the project’s sustainability goals?

A: To fulfill the site’s sustainability potential the design team has identified several proposed sustainability goals for the project, including:

- Design a low maintenance landscape that fosters habitat, by selecting only native or adaptive plants and restoring in-water ecosystems for aquatic species.
- Manage stormwater runoff at the site by using natural precipitation to irrigate the plantings.
- Mitigate potential damage related to future climate conditions predicted for New York City, by elevating the esplanade above the sea level-adjusted 100-year flood elevation and designing a topside landscape that can tolerate (and thrive) in temporarily flooded conditions.
- Specify durable, easily maintained, environmentally preferable materials, with an emphasis on products that are locally sourced with reduced life cycle impacts.
- Minimize the Project’s energy consumption by investigating on-site renewable technologies.
- Create an active and educational environment with a comfortable micro-climate that benefits users and the surrounding community, by providing opportunities for physical fitness, public art, and learning that highlight the Project’s sustainability features.

10. Q: Has the Department for the Aging (DFTA) been consulted about this project?

A: The Department for the Aging has been consulted about the project and based on the designs for both the bridge and the esplanade, they have not raised any concerns around current designs for the bridge. EDC has also engaged the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities which supported the creation of an ADA-compliant pedestrian bridge and saw no issues with regards to accessibility on and off the ramp/bridge to and from the esplanade as long as it meets current federal code.

11. Q: We heard that there will be a large permanent wall around Sutton Place Park and in the general area. Is this true?

A: No, there is no intention or plan to enclose Sutton Place Park permanently, although there may be some temporary safety fencing for areas during construction.

12. Q: How did the designers engage with local park goers (Sutton Place Park) about this project?

A: EDC is working on behalf of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. EDC's Manhattan Borough Director, who works on the Government and Community Relations team at EDC, will continue to engage the community on matters related to the Park and future Esplanade. EDC will ensure the community is apprised of any updates and provided feedback received from the community to the design team.

13. Q: Will all of Sutton Place Park be impacted and for how long? How and will we still have access to the park during and before construction? What are Parks' thoughts on this and have they engaged with the community about this?

A: We understand the community's desire to use the park but need to keep safety in mind first and foremost when determining construction staging. We will continue to work with the NYC Department of Parks to minimize any construction impacts and their duration, and to restore the park as quickly as possible after construction within the park is completed.

14. Q: Why is 54th Street the location of the proposed bridge?

A: Parks and EDC have looked at all potential entrance locations along the East Midtown Greenway and based on street end height and ramp lengths, 54th Street was the best location. Furthermore, 54th Street was recommended as a location in CB6's 197-A plan which was adopted by the City Planning Commission and the City Council in Spring 2010.

Nearby street ends are as tall as 30' higher than 54th St. which would increase length of these ramps by 20-95% and would require additional support structures both on land and in-water. The ramps would be particularly longer over the water, which would go beyond the limits of the project's environmental permits, and all alternatives would add significant cost to the project. All other possible locations would also have significant impacts to street end parks, sidewalks, and/or residential buildings.

The elevation at 53rd Street is only 12'. A potential ramp at 53rd St. would be longer because a minimum 16' clearance is necessary to extend the ramp over the FDR. A bridge at 53rd St. would require more ramp length on the land side (and an associated support structure) to build it so it can cross over the FDR. Additionally, a ramp here would require closing the off-ramp from the FDR, which is a decision that would need to be made by NYCDOT and NYSDOT.

15. Q: What about privacy for the residents living along Sutton Place South? How high will these ramps be and will there be a direct view from the bridge into people's homes?

A: The pedestrian bridge has been strategically placed as far as possible from any existing building/windows. The windows of 45 Sutton Place South are higher and not at the same elevation as the crossing over FDR. Users of the pedestrian bridge will be crossing at over +-100' away from any of the residential buildings surrounding the pedestrian bridge crossing. There will not be a direct view from the pedestrian bridge into windows of residents in the area.

16. Q: What is the proposed height of the bridge?

A: The deck elevation is approximately 17.5 ft. above the FDR. NYSDOT Bridge design regulations require pedestrian bridges to be 16 ft. above major roadways and the depth of the deck is 1.5 ft. The pedestrian fence extends 8'-4" above the deck of the bridge and the highest point of the arch is 18 ft. above the deck of the bridge. The design was reviewed in order to meet the standards and requirements of NYCDOT.

17. **Q: Why is the bridge an arch?**

A: An important goal in the design of the 54th Street Pedestrian Bridge was the reduction of the size and length of the access ramp located on the Sutton Place Park side. The design team designed a very thin bridge superstructure to achieve that goal which translates into an elegant structural arch to act as the main support for the clear span over the FDR. . It will also be built with minimally sized structural members to increase transparency and visibility of the waterfront. We will also paint the arch with a gray color consistent with other bridges spanning the FDR Drive and approved by NYC's Public Design Commission.

18. **Q: If there is a bridge at 51st Street already, why are you building a bridge at 54th Street?**

A: The bridge at 51st Street is reached at both ends by stairs and is not ADA accessible. All new construction must allow for universal access per the Americans with Disabilities Act and compliant with the ADA Standards. Additionally, the southern limit of the project is 53rd Street.

19. **Q: Has an elevator for the bridge at either 54th or 55th Street been considered? Why/why not?**

A: An elevator as the only egress point at the end of the esplanade would cause a bottleneck in circulation at the current esplanade terminus. The design and installation of an elevator in the East River would be a technical challenge. Furthermore, an outdoor waterfront elevator requires continual and costly maintenance by NYC Parks, the entity responsible for maintaining the site. Finally, an elevator does not negate the need for a bridge over the FDR that lands in Sutton Place Park.

20. **Q: To what extent will the public have the ability to comment on the project and receive feedback.**

A: We welcome the community to comment on the project by sending an email to the project email address: EastMidtownWaterfront@edc.nyc and we will do our best to respond to concerns. The design team and EDC will also make presentations to the public based on the schedule indicated at our previous updates to CBs 6 and 8 and construction timelines.

21. **Q: Who ultimately approves the bridge location, design, and budget?**

A: The project was funded by the Mayor; EDC is the implementing agency managing design and construction; and NYC Parks will own and maintain the overall project. Through an agreement with NYC Parks, NYCDOT will maintain and inspect the bridge.

22. **Q: What type of subsurface investigations were done? I saw a barge out in the river for a few weeks.**

A: The design team conducted a geotechnical investigation in the river and in Sutton Place Park. The borings are standard practice to determine the elevation and strength of rock and soil below ground in order to properly engineer the structure.

23. Q: What further community outreach is planned for the community?

A: EDC welcomes feedback and will continue to actively work with the community to ensure a successful project. The design team and EDC will also make presentations to the public based on the schedule indicated at our previous updates to CBs 6 and 8 and construction timelines.

24. Q: How noisy will the construction be and what are the hours of work?

A: All the work will follow the City's noise code regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection. The pile installation for the greenway will predominantly be *drilled* instead of *driven* – not the hammering sound people associate with piles. The work in the north of the project at 62nd street will be driven piles, however. A lot of the work is out in the East River and buffered by the existing noise of the FDR but is not overly noisy activity. For the area around East 54th Street and Clara Coffey Park, the utility, curb work and bridge ramp construction will have some noise associated with truck movements but will follow the City's noise code. The work hours follow the City's allowed hours of 7am to 6pm. Any after hours or weekend work would require special approval and notice will be provided to the local community.

25. Q: Who is contracted to build the project?

A: EDC hired Skanska USA Building, Inc as a Construction Manager for the project. They then hire contractors for different scopes of the work.

26. Q: Will there be traffic impacts?

A: There will be limited impacts to traffic on the FDR for some scopes of work. For the installation of the bridge, there will be a few full overnight closures of the FDR. For the area around East 54th Street and Clara Coffey Park, the utility and curb work will have some impacts on the intersection. All of this work is coordinated closely with DOT and their street permitting units.

27. Q: Is there any art or interpretive signage included in the design?

A: In partnership with NYC Parks and NYCDOT, we selected an environmental artist to serve on the design team. Stacy Levy joined the team after an extensive selection process—culminating at a public meeting in February 2018—and involving an invitational competition with 47 artists, interviews, and a presentation before the community. Her artwork is titled Diatom Walk and is inspired by a creature in the East River: the single-cell microscopic algae called diatoms. She brings them into view by creating a pattern of pavers cast with local diatoms' forms. There are three interpretive panels along the Greenway as well. One explores the habitat and mechanics of the East River, the second describes the changing historic changes to the shoreline and the impact of rising seas, and the third explains how the Greenway was designed for a healthy ecosystem.