

## SESSION GUIDE

### IN THE MIDDLE, ON THE EDGE: COLLECTIVE VISIONS FOR CONTESTED WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 11 AM – 12:15 PM PST

American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Conference on Landscape Architecture 2021, Nashville, TN



Vision Chelsea Creek, The Gowanus Lowlands (Credit: SCAPE)

## SESSION OVERVIEW

In the environmentally sensitive and rapidly changing waterfront neighborhoods of Gowanus and East Boston, communities are advocating for more resilient, accessible, and equitable waterfronts amid waves of real estate interest. Two non-profits and their design collaborators discuss grassroots efforts to shape open space policy and development on these contested sites.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will learn about the opportunities and challenges that grassroots urban waterfront planning presents and how landscape architects can plug into these unique client structures.
2. Participants will learn how to encourage communities to become involved in the planning process as well as opportunities and challenges of virtual engagement.
3. Participants will learn about how planning frameworks adapt to the changing needs of their communities, particularly as community members become involved in the process of envisioning and zoning for new waterfront developments.
4. Participants will discuss new models for public-private partnerships (PPPs) between local nonprofits and developers and how these PPPs must balance input from multiple stakeholders to find working compromises.

## SESSION STRUCTURE

**Introduction 5 minutes Gena Wirth / SCAPE**

- Brief introductions of the speakers
- Brief introduction of the sites + historical context  
Side by Side comparison: Gowanus Canal + Chelsea Creek
- Brief introduction of Visioning Projects - similarities / differences

**Presentation 1 12 minutes Andrea Parker / Gowanus Canal Conservancy**

- Context and mission of the GCC
- Need for the Lowlands Plan + Funding sources for the plan
- Creation of the Plan and its Phases (Vision, Masterplan)
- A Living Plan

**Presentation 2 12 minutes Magdalena Ayed / The Harborkeepers**

- Context and mission of the Harborkeepers
- Need for the Vision Chelsea Creek plan + Funding sources for the plan
- Creation of the Plan
- A Living Plan

**Conclusion 5 minutes Moderated by Gena Wirth**

What is the role of design?

- Community as client
- Integrating community led-design projects into firm business model

**Q&A 20 minutes Moderated by Gena Wirth**

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## PANELISTS



**Andrea Parker**  
Gowanus Canal Conservancy

Andrea Parker is a landscape architect and the Executive Director of the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, a nonprofit group dedicated to facilitating the development of an equitable, resilient, and vibrant open space network centered on the Gowanus Canal.



**Magdalena Ayed**  
The Harborkeepers

Magdalena is a climate activist and the founder and Executive Director of Harborkeepers in East Boston, a group that builds community resilience and environmental stewardship of the East Boston Harbor waterfront and the Chelsea Creek.

## MODERATOR

**Gena Wirth, RLA**  
Design Principal, SCAPE Landscape Architecture DPC

Co-founder and Member, Dredge Research Collaborative



Gena Wirth, RLA, is Design Principal at SCAPE. She works with cities, community advocates, and landowners to reveal the ecological and cultural potential of public landscapes.

As Design Principal, Gena translates research into practice and leads the design of complex urban landscapes including public and private waterfronts, regional trail systems, parks, plazas, and resilience plans. Her portfolio includes the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, a master plan for a seven-mile linear waterfront park that connects Hudson Valley communities to the river, and the recently constructed Midtown Center Plaza, a forested public commons in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Gena is an advocate for ecological systems design with the non-profit group the Dredge Research Collaborative and has taught design studios at Columbia University, Syracuse University and Rutgers University. She holds a Master's in Landscape Architecture and Master of Urban Planning with Distinction from Harvard University and a Bachelor's in Horticulture from the University of Delaware.

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## REFERENCES

Source 1      The Gowanus Lowlands project page on the SCAPE website

<https://www.scapestudio.com/projects/the-gowanus-lowlands/>

Source 2 Vision Chelsea Creek project page on the SCAPE website  
<https://www.scapestudio.com/projects/vision-chelsea-creek/>

Source 3 Gowanus Canal Conservancy website  
<https://gowanuscanalconservancy.org/>

Source 4 The Harborkeepers website  
<https://www.harborkeepers.org/>

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## NOTES