

EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD

A COMPREHENSIVE RESILIENCE STRATEGY FOR NYC

Background

Climate change is not abstract for our region. More than one million people across New York and New Jersey live at risk of flooding today. Yet, eight years after Hurricane Sandy, we are still unprepared. What is at stake? Your home, your business, your school, your park, your neighborhood, and your way of life. Delaying action is not an option. Now is the time to address the greatest threat to our region's future.

The Rise to Resilience campaign is today's roadmap for a more resilient tomorrow. Together we can build resilience, support our communities and economy and create a more equitable and just region.

Please join us at rise2resilience.org.

Issue overview

Hurricane Sandy and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored our region's lack of preparedness for crises with clear lessons for how the global challenge of climate change must be addressed locally. We need broad public awareness, government leadership, improved public infrastructure, evidence-based and people-centered policies and investments that prioritize frontline communities to avoid the enormous economic and social impacts of climate change.

ACTION: Strengthen Intro 1620 for a well-funded and comprehensive resilience strategy

The New York City Council should amend and pass Intro 1620, a comprehensive five-borough plan proposed by the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, and/or seek additional legislation that accomplishes the following elements of a citywide strategy. This strategy must be funded adequately to be effective and support robust risk assessment, community engagement, planning and implementation.

Such a strategy should help the City to:

- > **Manage effectively:** clear authority, resources, and charge must be established to develop a regularly updated and people-driven comprehensive resilience strategy for the City that is informed by the NYC Panel on Climate Change (NPCC), coordinated across jurisdictions and steered by an expanded Climate Change Adaptation Task Force in close collaboration with the Waterfront Management and Environmental Justice Advisory Boards.¹ The City should clarify the public the agencies responsible for key resilience functions and conduct a public awareness campaign at the community or borough level to inform people about the threat of climate change and what is being done to mitigate those risks.
- > **Assess risk and vulnerability:** building from the in-development future flood risk maps and informed by the NPCC and local communities, the City should develop and map risk profiles (physical, social, environmental, economic vulnerability) throughout the 2100 floodplain to inform adaptive pathways and requirements for permits, planning, zoning, and capital projects.
- > **Engage in an equitable and community-driven engagement and planning process:** informed at the outset from an assessment of risk and vulnerability (and transparency about feasibility), the City should empower and meaningfully include community members in a robust engagement process to determine strategies at the local level. These efforts should be additive, building from existing community-driven plans if available, and an emphasis should be placed on the outsized risks posed to frontline and environmental justice communities. In doing so, the City should seek to reduce cumulative stressors to people and wildlife and meet NYC's Nature Goals.^{2,3}
- > **Implement equitable risk reduction strategies:** key starting points include building a long-term capital planning budget and framework that leverages public and private investment toward risk reduction, investing equitably through prioritization of risk reduction, low-income communities, communities of color and other socially vulnerable communities, and holistic approaches. In doing so, the City should work closely with federal and state partners to develop a pathway toward increasing resilient affordable and public housing in areas of lower risk and funding capital repairs and retrofits of existing stock. Building community resilience at the frontlines is also needed through establishing ongoing budgetary support for expanded social resilience and assistance provision (e.g., Flood Help NY). And finally, the City should establish a long-term funded voluntary buyout and floodplain restoration program.
- > **Integrate resilience into how buildings and infrastructure are designed, built and maintained:** develop a path toward requiring the City's Climate Design Guidelines (or integrate into code) for major public and private capital projects. Incentivize living shorelines and use of the resilient waterfront standard, WEDG. And, explore the use of building grades for resiliency, as is being done for energy efficiency.
- > **Invest in green workforce development** to lead to emerging jobs supporting wind power infrastructure, maintenance and management of flood mitigation measures, and construction and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.

¹ Proposed is an expansion of the Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, which has to date focused on infrastructure and design guidelines, but has the authority for a broader purview (local law 42). Expansion should include agencies, frontline community representatives and practitioners in the fields of design, engineering, and ecology.

² Bautista, E; E Hanhardt; J Camilo Osorio, and N Dwyer. 2014. New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Waterfront Justice Project. Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability.

³ WE ACT For Environmental Justice. 2019. 2020 [New York City Policy Agenda, Campaigns & Initiatives](#).