



December 17, 2021

Dear Mayor-elect Adams,

Congratulations on your historic victory as the next Mayor of New York City. The undersigned member organizations of the Rise to Resilience Coalition, spearheaded by Waterfront Alliance, are committed to New York City and its future as a thriving and livable City. As you begin your tenure as Mayor, we stand ready to partner with you to accelerate climate progress through infrastructure, funding, and planning.

Despite New York's leadership in climate legislation and policy, there is agreement across communities and advocates that a great deal more must be done expeditiously to prepare for our climate future and to support the needs of local communities.

Climate disasters across the country and in New York City have become more frequent and intense. In the 2010s alone, they cost the nation \$81 billion per year – up from \$18 billion per year in the 1980s.

Climate resilient infrastructure across all sectors is one of the key ways to ensure that people, nature, and the environment thrive together, alongside promoting economic development that improves the quality of life across the five boroughs.

Research shows that every federal grant dollar dedicated towards flood mitigation can save \$6 in future disaster costs. Given the urgency of preparing for the next storm, each level of government must make every effort to ensure federal dollars coming to our region are put to work protecting New York City.

We need to send a strong, consistent message to New Yorkers, especially those that have suffered through extreme storms and face frequent flooding and extreme heat, that their concerns are being heard and this administration is up to the task of tackling complex infrastructure challenges, willing to innovate, and ready to act starting today. We are prepared to partner with you to help you achieve your vision for helping New Yorkers have a more livable future.

The Rise to Resilience coalition urges you to take immediate action in three ways - implementing a five-borough climate adaptation plan; developing a robust resilient public housing climate agenda; and committing to significant green infrastructure and open space funding in the FY 2023 City Budget.



Consistent with analysis and recommendations laid out in the Rise to Resilience report, *Resilience Starts Today: The First 100 Days Priorities for the Next Mayoral Administration*, the coalition is prepared to help advise and support your actions.

An addendum is attached (pages 6-8) which dives deeper into specific regulatory, legislative, and funding actions connected to these three priorities.

Overview

1. **Implementation, Outreach, and Tracking of the Five-Borough Climate Adaptation Plan (Local Law 122):** This law, passed in November 2021, requires the Mayor's Office to oversee the development of and publicly release a holistic plan that prioritizes the most vulnerable communities and significantly minimizes the risks that climate hazards pose to the city, including extreme storms, rising sea levels, tidal flooding, flood surges, wildfire, extreme heat, precipitation, and wind. The first plan will be due by September 30, 2022, with mandated updates every ten years. This legislation creates a tremendous opportunity, if done right, to create resilience plans and strategies for the most vulnerable neighborhoods, elevate community voices, and recommend actionable infrastructure solutions that can leverage federal and state funds.

We urge the administration to robustly support, fund, and resource the implementation of Local Law 122 and establish public milestones for its implementation.

2. **Resilient Public Housing Climate Agenda:** Bringing together all NYCHA climate solutions in a master strategy, committing to equipment modernization, emissions reductions, emergency preparedness, flood proofing, and green infrastructure can set a new course for comprehensive modernization across the NYCHA system. Building off of the report *Climate Change at NYCHA, A Plan to Adapt*, and recent updates to *NYCHA's Sustainability Agenda*, the next administration must develop a strategy to make NYCHA properties more resilient by funding and implementing the many recommendations for climate resilience developed in the last year.

While prioritizing the maintenance crisis affecting NYCHA housing is a top priority, we also envision NYCHA properties that can serve as mixed-use community resilience hubs, particularly in the floodplain. NYCHA, for example, holds the largest non-park expanse of open green space in New York City. In addition, public housing in the floodplain merits special attention as post-Sandy recovery projects are still underway. There are over 500



NYCHA buildings in the projected 2050 floodplain that will face particular challenges due to storm surge and sea level rise.

Solutions require investment into capital and open space improvements; tenant quality of life; and envisioning the impact that a NYCHA property can have beyond its footprint in providing community climate resilience. The new mayor has an opportunity to ensure that NYCHA's climate change strategies are funded and implemented through the state by the federal infrastructure bill and Build Back Better.

3. Climate Resilience in the New York City FY23 Budget: The Rise to Resilience coalition believes climate funding should be baselined as a part of the City's budget. Only with proven, committed reserves can adaptation and resilience goals meet the City's massive needs. There are several open space and green infrastructure funding priorities that are particularly important such as wetlands protections, one percent of the budget for NYC Parks, and incentive programs that support homeowner retrofits.

We look forward to your response and to partnering with you and your administration as we seek a shared commitment to a climate resilient future for New York City.

Sincerely,

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Rise to Resilience is a campaign and coalition spearheaded by the Waterfront Alliance. We are more than 100 organizations representing leaders in business, labor, environmental justice, volunteer organizations, scientists, environmental advocates, and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make building climate resilience an urgent priority.



Addendum

The addendum outlines specific strategies and actions the new administration should take to advance the three priorities outlined in the memo.

Implementation, Outreach, and Tracking of the Five-Borough Climate Adaptation Plan

- Commit to a social vulnerability map that is rooted in science overlaid on the various climate hazards required to be outlined in the plan. For example, refer to the [CDC Social Vulnerability Index](#) (SVI) which can help better prepare strategies for the most vulnerable communities and target emergency responses to events like hurricanes, disease outbreaks, or other emergencies. Also, refer to the NYC-EJA's [Waterfront Justice Project](#) which focuses on urban industrial waterfront communities and impacts on public health.
- Center the plan through an anti-racism lens and address inequities faced by communities most impacted by climate change.
- Evaluate both natural and human-made climate hazards, such as the unintended consequence of poorly planned developments, particularly with respect to heat island effect and impacts on overburdened infrastructure.
- Align planning with the Army Corps Harbor and Tributary Study process (draft expected in Spring 2022) and work to partner with Corps; pushing the Corps to focus on structural, non-structural, and importantly, nature-based approaches.
- Require sustained engagement with communities.
- Ensure the Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency (MOCR) is more fully staffed, trained, and funded for community outreach; as well as engaged in interagency efforts to support Local Law implementation.
- Ensure that the capacity and resources needed for the public education and engagement process, as well as plan implementation, are reflected in the FY 2023 budget and beyond.



Resilient Public Housing Climate Agenda

- Assess, prioritize, fund, and implement the recommendations in the report, [Climate Change at NYCHA: A Plan to Adapt](#).
- Integrate resilience and sustainability upgrades into new NYCHA funding streams and work to secure funding from FEMA BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) program.
- While prioritizing the maintenance crisis affecting NYCHA housing and the significant upgrades and retrofits required, envision each NYCHA property as a “mixed-use community resilience hub.” This requires a focus on NYCHA campuses as major assets for greening their campuses and surrounding communities.
 - Develop a multiple hazards approach that reduces chronic stressors.
 - Engage residents in preparedness trainings, apply infrastructure investments, and facilitate relationship-building activities on-site.
 - Systematically leverage opportunities for workforce development as part of community resilience.
- Prioritize green infrastructure investments to reduce impacts of flooding, manage urban heat island effect, and support stormwater management.
 - Work to address major gaps with capital budget and upgrades.
 - Ensure that cooling centers are coupled with green space investments.
 - Leverage co-benefits from decarbonization and energy efficiency.
 - Refer to the recent Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel report, [Resilience in NYCHA's Marlboro Houses](#), for resources and priorities regarding green infrastructure, resident engagement, and energy efficiency.

Climate Resilience in the New York City FY23 Budget

- Commit a minimum of one percent of the budget for NYC Parks in perpetuity.
- Increase funding for green infrastructure and green roofs. Local laws 92 and 94 do not go far enough, as there are substantial areas of exemption for the sustainable roofing zone requirements. In addition, NYCDEP should be directed to apply for federal and state funding opportunities that significantly increase the City’s capacity for funding climate resilience projects.



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- Create and fund a citywide resilience retrofit pilot program for homeowners and building owners and provide funding for a proof-of-concept program. This will help pave the way for federal funding for resilience and home energy retrofits.
- Implement recommendations from the [Wetlands Management Framework](#), released by Natural Areas Conservancy and NYC Parks, by making an interagency commitment to protecting flood-prone areas through acquisition and transfer of wetlands. Strengthen zoning and regulatory protection and funding.
- Create and fund a Director of the Public Realm. New York lacks a central position within its government for planning and maintaining the public realm. Refer to Municipal Arts Society/NY4P report, [A Public Champion for the Public Realm](#) which highlights interagency cooperation and coordination needed to advance climate resilient open space projects.