

Civic Association Resident Advisory Group Meeting - Resilient NJ

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: July 30, 2021
TO: The Project Team
FROM: CHPlanning
SUBJECT: Resilient NJ - Atlantic County Coastal Communities (ACCR) – Youth Focus Group with the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City

A meeting was held on July 28, 2021 at 12 noon to 1:00 PM with teens of the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City to discuss the Resilient NJ Project. The Boys and Girl’s Club provides resources for the development of young people, from all backgrounds to realize their full potential as responsible and caring adults. The meeting was held onsite at organization’s facility at 317 N Pennsylvania Ave, Atlantic City, NJ.

The attendees for this event were:

- 20 teens enrolled in the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City’s summer program.
- 4 Adult Camp Counselors

Names of participants were not collected to protect the privacy of minors.

The following was discussed at the meeting:

1. Introduction - The moderators introduced themselves, explained what City Planners do and introduced the concept of resilience. We discussed experiences with past disasters, and then discussed how responses to future disasters should be changed and the vision for a safer and more resilient community.
2. Past Experiences - We asked students about their past experiences with disasters. The conversation centered on the experience with Hurricane Sandy and other storms. We did not focus on this in depth or for very long with any one story, so as not to dwell on any traumatic experiences. There was also additional discussion about the field of urban planning and what sorts of projects the moderators had worked on.
 - a. Extreme events they have experienced
 - i. Hurricane Sandy and other storms
 - ii. Flooding is common occurrence – places important to the youth are in flood prone areas including their schools, neighborhoods, and the Boys and Girls Club facility
 - iii. Tornadoes
 - iv. Earthquakes

- b. Personal Experiences
 - i. Having to evacuate and live with extended family
 - ii. Family members had to climb onto their roof
 - iii. About half the participants said they did not evacuate during Hurricane Sandy and they were left without electricity for a long time
 - iv. During Hurricane Sandy - Many local people did not take the evacuation order seriously because they have received a lot of false alarms in the past. They didn't expect it to be serious. Analogy to "Crying Wolf" - It makes the people not trust the warning systems, and they would rather stay home than evacuate to an unknown place.

 - c. Emergency Preparedness
 - i. The school curriculum doesn't talk about emergency preparedness or climate vulnerabilities specific to the local area. They do have Fire Drills and Active Shooter Drills but they don't have drills for natural hazards.
 - ii. They receive alerts about potential hazards by email from the school. If there is no email, they assume there's no issue.
 - iii. When asked, 1 out of the 20 teen participants said they had a family plan in case of an emergency

 - d. Aspirations
 - i. A handful of the kids said they wanted to stay in Atlantic City when they grow up. Ideas for jobs they wanted to have include lawyer, engineer, chef, and professional gambler.
3. What should be done in the future? We asked participants to identify what community locations, assets, or programs are important to protect.
- a. We asked participants to identify what community locations, assets, or programs are important to protect.
 - i. Our own homes and neighborhoods
 - ii. The Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City - It floods and it is an important place for local kids to gather
 - iii. Our schools – they also flood
 - iv. All the stores – especially Renaissance Plaza (between New York Ave. and Kentucky Ave.)
 - v. Save A Lot grocery store– it has food
 - vi. Pharmacies – they have medicine
 - vii. Ocean City
 - viii. Know where the homeless are and take care of them. They often congregate at Renaissance Plaza.
4. We asked participants what has not worked that we need to do better?
- a. Transportation

- i. Many of these kids (about half) said they did not evacuate when Hurricane Sandy happened – they stayed put and were without electricity for a long time
 - ii. Not everyone has access to transportation or a place to go when there is an evacuation order. They have no options so they stay put.
 - b. Better warning systems
 - i. They receive alerts about potential hazards by email from the school. If there is no email, they assume there's no issue. They didn't know about other ways emergencies are communicated.
 - c. Emergency Preparedness
 - i. Drills – so people know what to do in an emergency and don't panic
 - ii. Have a family plan including knowing where to meet in case you are separated
- 5. Vision - We asked students to brainstorm about their vision for a safer, more resilient community.
 - a. Build a new Reef / Jetty further out to sea to act as a new barrier to the barrier island. (They also talked about "Force Fields" to protect the City)
 - b. Preserve more natural areas
 - i. Plant more grass and natural areas
 - ii. Put skate parks in areas prone to flooding. They can be used when there is no flood.
 - c. Better sidewalks
 - d. Put houses on Stilts to stay above the flood waters
 - e. Have a system of water pumps to take the water away (Like the Dutch windmills – although they liked the analogy of giant "straws" that suck the water away)
 - f. Get rid of seagulls (this could be relevant to the idea of finding a better species balance in the natural habitat)
 - g. Use more things that are biodegradable so there is less trash
- 6. Strategies – Student suggestions:
 - a. Improve communications
 - i. Have different ways of communicating. Phone call, internet, radio
 - ii. Suggestions for ways to communicate if electric/phone/internet is down would be a Car that drives through the neighborhood with a loudspeaker that announces important messages and/or an emergency siren
 - iii. Big warning speaker (continuous announcement) or siren
 - iv. Emergency call protocols using school closing channels/procedure
 - v. Instead of "Crying Wolf" every time there is a potential emergency – messages should be more specific about how likely or how bad events might be and what options people have to find safety.
 - b. Make sure people have transportation and a safe place to go
 - i. Public, Free buses be available to pick up people and take them to a safe shelter when they need to evacuate

- ii. Special and early assistance for the elderly and people with disabilities.
 - iii. Buses should go places where homeless people congregate to help them evacuate too.
 - iv. Have a safe place for people to go – these places need to be able to accommodate anyone with disabilities.
 - v. Give everyone an inflatable boat
- c. Incorporating preparedness in school health education curriculum
- i. Have different kinds of “drills” at school and include more locally specific climate resiliency lessons in the school curriculum. Flood Drills, Tornado Drills, etc. (This was not particularly popular with the kids, but was suggested by the staff).
 - ii. Provide a checklist to help people develop a family emergency plan
- d. Peer consultation among kindred organizations (eg. AC Boys and Girls connects with Miami Boys and Girls) to share ideas and experiences.

7. Next Steps

- a. The planning team shared the ResilientNJ-ACCR website and how to interact with it by adding the Boys and Girls Club facility to the map.
- b. The planning team remains available to meet with the Boys and Girls Club again upon invite.



RESILIENT NJ

Planning for the Future

—
Presentation to the
Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City

July 28, 2021



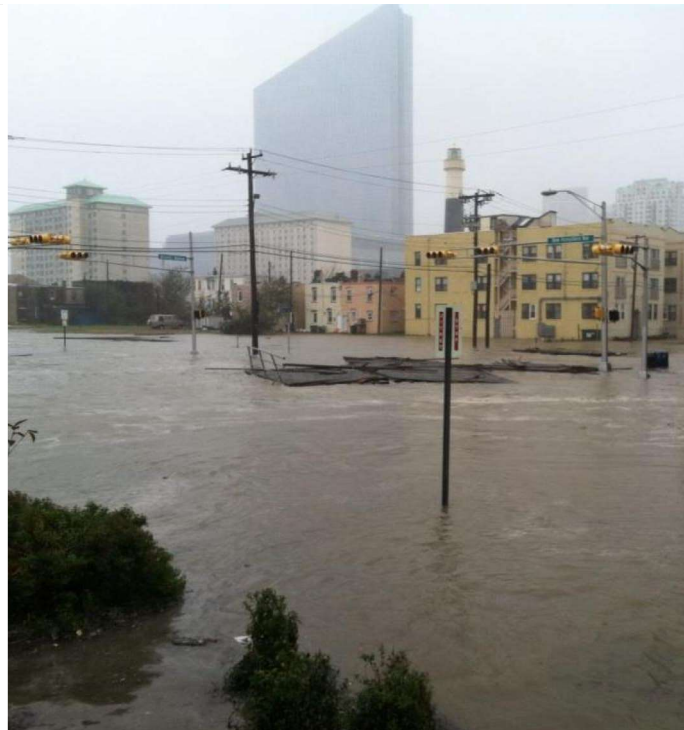
Why are we
Here?



We want to hear from you!

- What are your perspectives for a more “Resilient” future
- How can we all be more prepared for climate change, extreme weather, and other big disruptions
- What does our region need to thrive

Learn more at our website: [Resilient NJ -Atlantic County Coastal Region \(resilientnj-accr.com\)](https://resilientnj-accr.com)



What does “Resiliency” mean?

The ability to withstand and recover easily from difficulties



Who are we talking to?

Communities represented in the Atlantic County Coastal Region:

- Brigantine
- Atlantic City
- Ventnor
- Margate
- Longport
- Northfield
- Pleasantville

What is the Planning Process?



Understanding the problem



Visioning for the future



Developing strategies to meet our goals



Prioritizing Solutions



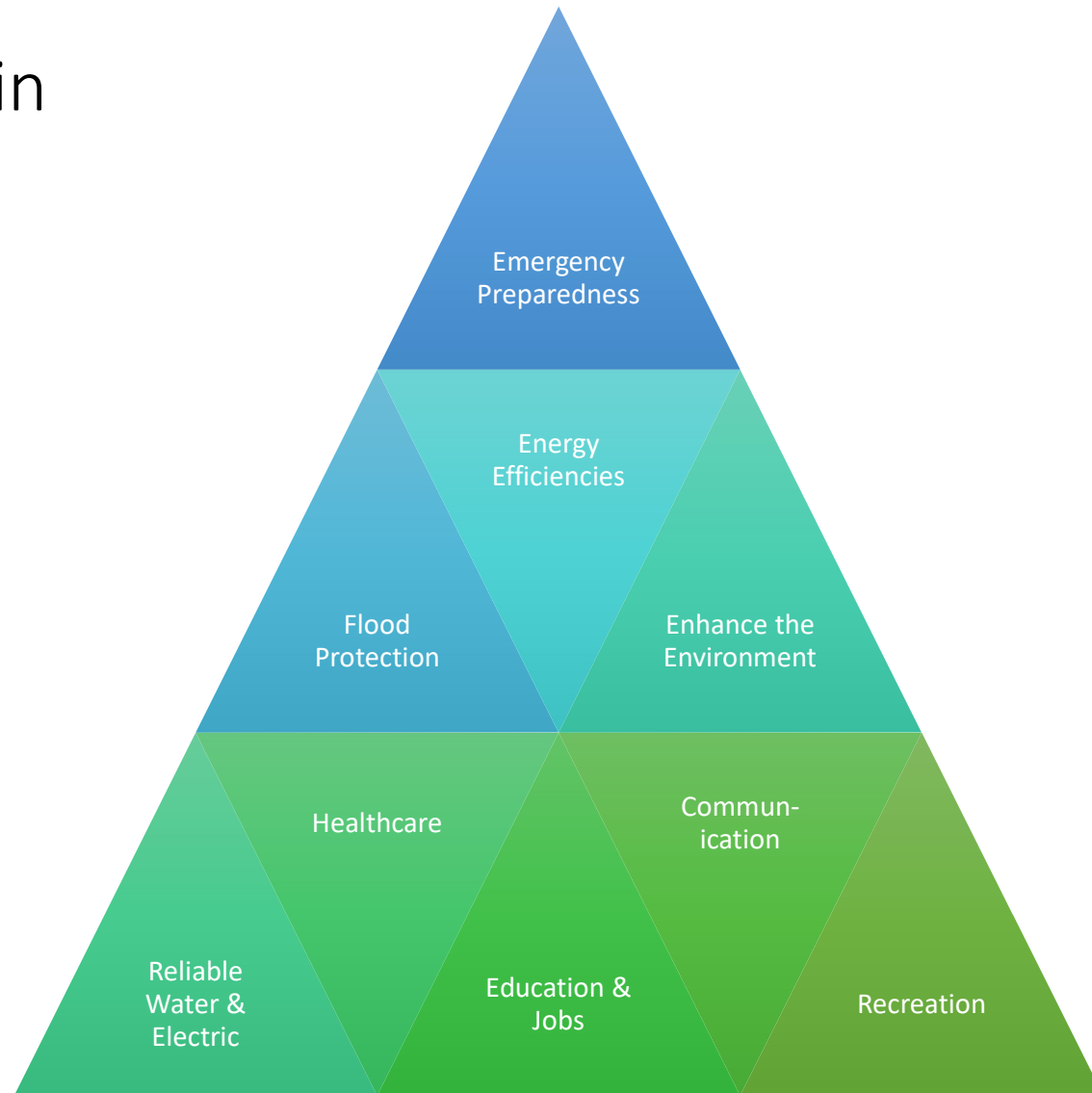
Preparing an Implementation Plan



Funding new projects and programs

What would be in
this Plan?

Projects and
Programs for....



What are we going to do with your input and what happens next?

Summer 2021 – Listening to our Focus Groups, Assessing Vulnerabilities and Developing Goals

Fall 2021 – Developing Ideas to meet our goals

Winter 2021/2022 – Refine and prioritize our recommendations

May 2022 – Final Plan

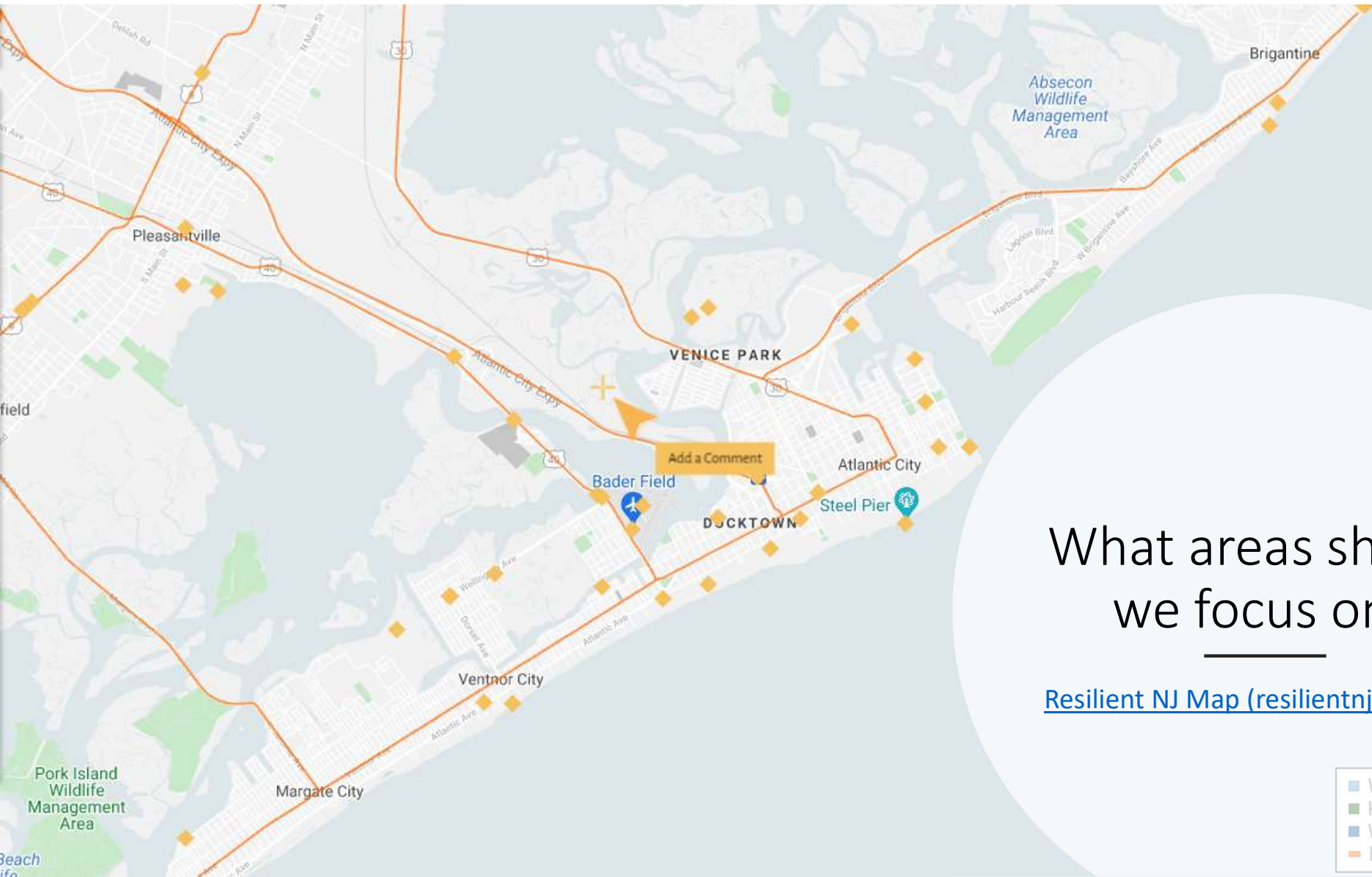
Summer 2022 – Seek funding and implement priority recommendations

Learn more at our website: [Resilient NJ -Atlantic County Coastal Region \(resilientnj-accr.com\)](https://resilientnj-accr.com)

Our Questions for YOU:

- What extreme events have you lived through and what were those experiences like?
 - What stories have you heard about big weather events from others?
- What worked well and what could have been done better?
- What are important things that were damaged and what should be protected in the future?
- How do you hear about big emergencies, and do you find out in time to be prepared?
- What would you need to be better prepared?
 - Do you have a plan in place for the next emergency?
- What needs to be here to make people who live here be able to stay?
 - What do you want to be when you grow up?
 - What should the community look like and have?
 - What do you hope stays here in the future?





What areas should we focus on?

[Resilient NJ Map \(resilientnj-accr.com\)](http://resilientnj-accr.com)

- Water Bodies
- Historic Sites
- Wetlands
- Evacuation Routes



Thank You

To bring

- Preparedness Pamphlets from Red Cross (Get from Jaime)
- Tchotchkes?
- Snacks / Refreshments?
- Big note taking pads on easles

- What is this leading to?
 - At the end of the day, we're going to identify what projects and policies should be in place to make sure your safe and able to live comfortably
 - By May 22
 - Whoever has the most innovative project is going to win an award for additional investments
 - 2nd round of meetings to review preliminary recommendations will be this Fall