



Community Conversation – Older Adults (Round 2)

Resilient NJ – Atlantic County Coastal Region

Target group: Older Adults

Date: April 5, 2022

Facilitators: Nieves Pimienta (RU-POET), Miriam Salerno (RU-POET)

Introduction and Welcome:

The facilitator welcomed participants and explained the purpose of the Community Conversation. The purpose of this follow-up conversation was to review the key takeaways from the first round of Community Conversations and discuss how the plan incorporated the participants' feedback into the draft scenarios and actions for the Resilient NJ Plan for the Atlantic County Coastal Region.

Conversation review and highlights:

The facilitator presented the recommendations from the draft plan and then opened the floor for a conversation with participants on their reactions/thoughts about the recommendations and whether they felt the actions accurately reflected their needs. The participants raised some additional challenges missing from the previous conversation and highlighted the importance of strategies for overcoming these challenges. Overall, the participants felt that the recommendations and the actions presented to the group were well-developed and would address many of their previous concerns. A summary of the point points in the conversation is presented below.

Communication Support

- Participants noted the importance of having adequate outlines and equipment to charge cell phones during an emergency, as people leave their homes without their cell phone charger when rushed to evacuate. In addition, equipment should be compatible with all cell phone types or have equipment for all cell phone models.
 - One participant recounted an experience of an acquaintance who ended up in the emergency room. Unfortunately, there was no phone charger available at the hospital or rehab center where they were relocated. This made it difficult to communicate with relatives.



- Participants expressed the importance of the ability to communicate with loved ones during an emergency to let them know they are okay.
- Participants suggested that the region create a designated channel to support the systematic and consistent dissemination of information during an emergency - a local TV station, Facebook Live feed, etc.
- One participant noted that Atlantic Electric, and the mayor's (Atlantic City) office, send emergency messages through landlines. However, participants were not aware if this is also available to cell phone users. If it is, residents should be made aware of how they can select their phone option for emergency calls.
- One participant suggested that the county/city should raise money to acquire and provide iPads to seniors to improve communication.

Social Media/ Media

- Participants recommended having a designated social media feed for updates, such as an emergency broadcast network of Facebook Live Feed. This will help residents access information and updates even if they are away from home. For example, if the resident leaves town to evacuate, such a feed can help them check in on their neighborhood's status or street.
- Television or local Radio stations broadcast important information. WOMD (or WOSD). There are Philadelphia radio stations that make emergency announcements too.
- For older adults not using social media, there needs to be a plan to collect and share information with them. Perhaps there should be a designated team for outbound calling to those that do not use social media.

Communication Infrastructure

- A participant recounted that during her Superstorm Sandy experience in 2012, it was challenging to get information about whether or not they would be able to access their homes. They had to constantly call but did not know who to call or where to find the information.
- Another participant recommended an outbound calling system similar to those used by public schools to notify of closures or delayed openings.
- Participants also discussed the need for wireless providers to have redundancy in capacity to assure ongoing service during and after the hurricane. The participant experienced many difficulties in connecting with others during the 9/11 events.

Evacuation



- Participants requested that there be additional buses available to take people away from the region.
- People should be evacuated towards other areas such as Burlington County or non-coastal regions such as Mays Landing, Hamilton, or the county's western end. Not Galloway since this also is a flooding area.
- Participants recommended implementing a practice of evacuation drills several times and for all types of residents, both year-round and seasonal residents.

Non-Shelter sites and Support

- Participants recommended having designated non-shelter- centers for residents to collect information, pick up toiletries and water or be used as designated meeting places with relatives. The participant suggested Pleasantville or neighboring communities.
- One participant noted that her church is not equipped to be used as a shelter. However, it could be a place to have water, hand sanitizer, get information or for families to reconnect and meet each other. The participant referred to these as potential “command centers” that can serve as hubs for information, meetings or pick-up toiletries.

Pets

- Participants reinforced the importance of pet-friendly shelters equipped with appropriate food and supplies for pets.
- Veterinarians could distribute information on these pet-friendly shelters through veterinarians. Maybe at sponsored visits such as for vaccinations. Vets can share a packet with information for pet owners.

Preparedness and support

- One participant recommended having a designated group of tech-savvy individuals available to assist those who do not have a computer or the support of relatives.
- Prepare and distribute an essential list of needs for people that need to evacuate, such as batteries, diapers, and water. Look for sponsors to provide bags.
- Conduct outreach to educate residents about having an emergency bag of essentials prepared at all times. One participant noted that she had had an emergency bag in the trunk of her car for a long time. In addition, the towns should provide all residents with emergency battery-operated radios.

Casino collaboration



- A participant noted that it is often challenging to figure out where to move one's car ahead of a storm. She recommended that the towns/city pre-arrange with the casinos to use their space as overflow parking during weather events. These garages are usually in elevated/protected areas.

Conclusion

- The participants expressed gratitude for having an opportunity to review the draft recommendations and continue an open dialogue about resiliency and evacuation planning issues. Several in the group expressed interest in continuing to be involved in these types of conversations in the future.

RESILIENT NJ

Atlantic County Coastal Region

Comprising **Atlantic County, Brigantine, Atlantic City, Ventnor, Margate, Longport, Northfield, Pleasantville, and the American Red Cross**

Community Conversations



PROJECT TEAM



ENGENUITY
INFRASTRUCTURE



LOCAL OFFICE
LANDSCAPE & URBAN DESIGN



STEERING COMMITTEE



American
Red Cross



Project Area.



A few things we heard from 1st Round:

- Need for designated facilities and procedures for seniors, people with disabilities, medical issues and other special needs (including children and pets).
- Residents need better quality, more consistent information (in multiple languages) during an emergency and better education on how to prepare.
- Assistance with accessing social service programs, benefits, and other resources during and after emergencies.
- Assistance with protecting and raising homes and preparing for the future.

What we heard.

How that translated to actions

- How did the things we discussed and heard become recommended actions?
- What are some recommended actions?
- What do you think of those actions?



Evaluate and Improve Preparedness Actions

Shelters

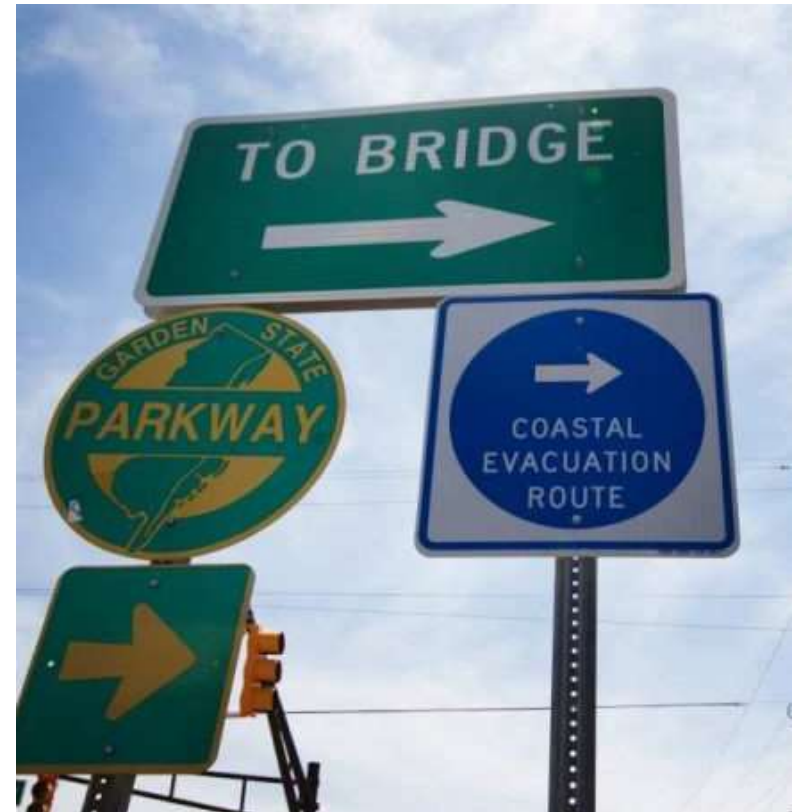
- Designated shelter for people w/ disabilities; children w/ special needs
- Power outlets for medical devices & accessible bathrooms
- Program focused on single parents
- Support services pets
- Accommodate allergies/special diets



Evaluate and Improve Preparedness Actions

Evacuation

- Evacuation vehicles to accommodate people with medical issues or medical devices
- Improve evacuation personnel training/planning (e.g., movement of medical equipment, people w/ disabilities, older adults in high-rise buildings)



Evaluate and Improve Preparedness Actions

Outreach and Education

- Consistent region-wide evacuation plan information (social media and non-digital channels)
- Training on how to digitize documents/storage of essential documents for evacuation
- Monthly information sessions about resources and programs available for disaster preparation and assistance (e.g., access to food, medicine, medical devices, blankets etc.)



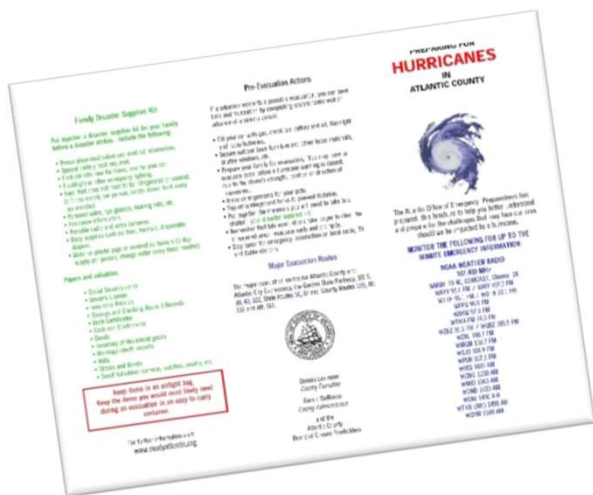
Evaluate and Improve Preparedness Actions

Social Services

- Ensure social services (e.g., homeless shelters) are more accessible throughout the region
- Organize special teams to help community members access social service programs and mental health assistance during response/recovery phases.
- Translate all Emergency Preparedness Materials into the multiple languages to reach all of the region's communities.



Translate all Emergency Preparedness Materials



Translate all Emergency Preparedness Materials into the multiple languages to reach all of the region's communities.

Languages other than English spoken at home, by census track:

Data Source: 2010 ACS, Janet Lau, Cartographer



Action Plan for Housing

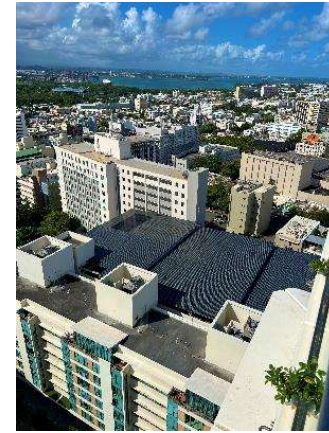
Adaptation Action Plan for Atlantic City & Pleasantville Housing Authority Communities and the Region's Senior Centers

Continuity of Service

- Elevate Electrical and Mechanical Equipment
- Solar Trellises on all surface parking lots
- Solar Panels on all rooftops
- Battery to provide off-grid capacity at night
- Porous paving and green infrastructure planting to aid in stormwater management



Rooftop Solar



Solar Trellises



Relocated Mechanical Equipment

Flood Mitigation

- Reprogram Ground Level

Long Term Strategies

Strategic Planning for potential redevelopment of the most vulnerable communities



Altman Towers



Whittington Senior Living



Walter Buzby



Stanley Village



Charles P Jefferies

Resilient New Jersey Atlantic County Coastal Region Vision Statement:

*"The Resilient New Jersey Atlantic County Coastal Region is a resilient and sustainable place where **protections from natural disasters, flooding, and sea level rise** enable the region to thrive; residents' **sense of belonging** and pride in their communities is enhanced by advancing quality of life through fair housing, accessible transportation, infrastructure improvements, and a diversified economy; and visitors are offered inviting recreational and cultural experiences that **honor the ocean and optimize the waterfront, public space, and regional assets that make the region an iconic destination.**"*

What should we add to the Recommended Actions?

- Other challenges that need to be addressed?
- What would the Recommended Action Plan should prioritize on?
- What do you think of those actions?



What should we add to the Recommended Actions?

- Other challenges that need to be addressed?
- What would the Recommended Action Plan should prioritize on?
- What do you think of those actions?



Thank you!

Resilient NJ



Regional Planning for a Stronger New Jersey