



Community Conversations - People with Disabilities (Round 2)

Resilient NJ – Atlantic County Coastal Region

Target group: People with Disabilities (and their caregivers)

Date: April 7, 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. 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. One participant stated that the most important aspects, such as overall preparedness, were well represented in the draft actions.

When asked about additional actions and challenges that have not been addressed during the presentation, participants noted the following observations:

- Access to food is essential. One participant who remained in the area during Superstorm Sandy noted that finding food and identifying where to get groceries was difficult. The participant stressed the importance of knowing where and how to access food when needed during an emergency event.
- There were concerns about overall safety during power outages. Participants remarked that loss of power gave the impression to some that it was a "free for all" situation, indicating the occurrence of looting, etc.
- One participant reinforced the need for clear information on where residents could go in the event of an evacuation. They indicated that it was difficult for some to find a place to go during and after Superstorm Sandy.



- There have been issues in the past regarding the accuracy of emergency alerts. For example, one participant stated that there had been emergency notifications about storms that never materialized or were not as severe as "they" indicated. This makes residents less likely to heed warnings when storms actually arrive. As a result, there is a mistrust of information.
- Participants expressed a need for additional support from the region to ensure that buildings are made safe to withstand weather events, such as hurricanes.
- Mental health is also a critical factor in preparedness. These events are stressful and traumatic for a community, and there is a need for additional and adequate resources to protect the mental health of residents. Preparedness plans need to include action about emotional health and assisting residents in handling anxiety. In addition, residents need resources on how to withstand potential emotional effects such as anxiety, stress, and depression.
 - For kids with Autism, therapy centers to deal with overstimulation, anxiety
 - The region should provide tools to manage social-emotional challenges before residents start suffering.
- Once again, participants mentioned a need for additional education and clear and consistent information. Preparedness education needs to be a priority in the region. Also, residents need to know where to find information – if they can't find it, it doesn't exist.
- Businesses, banks, schools, doctors' offices, housing facilities, social service agencies, and libraries are assets to protect.
- One participant recommended using schools as shelters to accommodate autistic kids. These buildings would provide ample space to have quiet time and exercise.
- Preparedness training is essential for parents of kids with disabilities and the kids themselves.

Conclusion

The group acknowledged that the recommendations and actions in the draft plan well represented their concerns. The draft plan covers the most important topics for these residents, such as communication, needed translations, evacuation drills, charging station, digital documentation system, etc. The group noted additional challenges to add to the plan, including addressing preparedness and resources related to mental, emotional, and behavioral health.

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.)



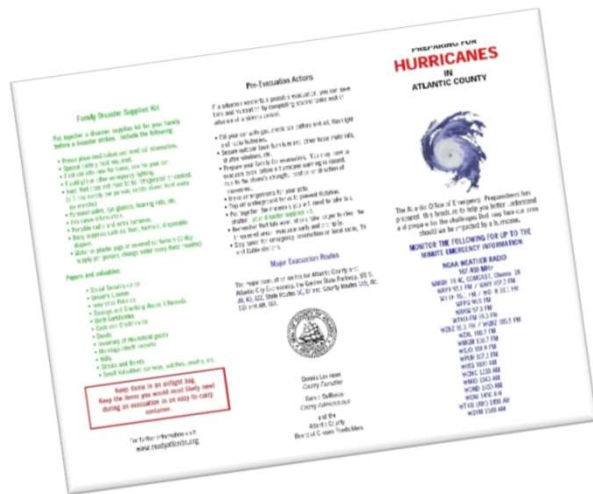
Evaluate and Improve Preparedness Actions

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

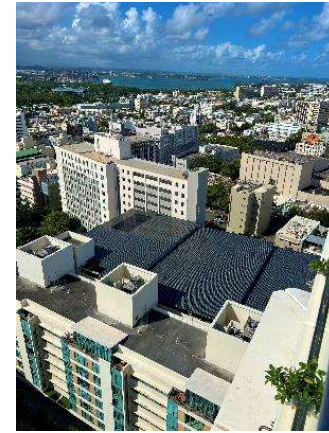
Adaptation Action Plan for Atlantic City & Pleasantville Housing Authority Communities and the Region's Senior Centers

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?



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Thank you!

Resilient NJ



Regional Planning for a Stronger New Jersey