



## **Community Conversation –Limited English Proficiency (Round 2) Resilient NJ – Atlantic County Coastal Region**

**Target group:** Residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

**Date:** May 11th, 2022

**Facilitator:** Nieves Pimienta (Rutgers-POET) *The facilitator conducted the presentation and discussion in Spanish.*

### **Introduction and Welcome:**

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

### **Conversation review and highlights:**

Participants felt that the draft actions presented by the facilitator addressed many of their concerns and challenges relating to preparedness. When asked what additional actions and challenges there are to be addressed, the following comments were mentioned:

#### Additional actions to consider:

- Access to food is essential. One participant noted that he stayed in the area during Sandy. They were prepared with food, but it was quickly damaged. The participant stated the flooding prevented his family from leaving the house to get food. His wife was pregnant at the time, so the situation was quite severe. He stated that many in the area endured hunger during this storm.
- Participants suggested applying a similar "check-in" system used before and after the storm. For example, the police or municipality support system visits every home before the storm. They could visit the ones that remained in place to offer food.
- Another participant expressed the need for mental health programs. The participant is an active member/employee of the Mental Health Association, which offers help and assistance to clients affected by climate change events.
  - The participant noted that her client's main concern was/is the loss of documents. Many victims of Hurricane Ida ended up leaving their homes without



their documents. In addition, they could not return to their homes due to the area's conditions or the property owner prohibited it.

- Participants suggested creating a formalized system or databank to identify people who are most vulnerable to target assistance to those specific individuals and families.
- One participant raised concerns about residents who are hearing impaired. For example, do they have the proper resources to access information without sound?
- Participants recommended a designated outreach program in Spanish, listing all available programs and resources.
  - According to the participants, the Mental Health Association is aware of programs not offered in Spanish.
  - Provide information on accessing the information and the resource/program itself.
  - There are mental health programs available. However, the challenge is that people do not know how to access the information that is already accessible.
- FEMA should release more funds and release them more quickly. For example, a participant noted that her agency received funds for programs focusing on mental health. However, the agency received these many months after the need arose.
- Access to mental health help after the event is essential. Anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and depression are some effects in the affected population.
- Access to mental help and support programs should be shared before the event, so residents know where they will be able to find services. It should be available in all languages.
- Participants noted the importance of involving the community in addressing, suggesting, and providing solutions. The community should be self-organized to become more proactive. For example, coordinate with community leaders to help prepare a plan on how to assist the community. Do not wait for other organizations, such as FEMA.
- Have an emergency system to validate lost documents; assist residents with replacing lost documents promptly.
- Assist residents in accessing essential medications during and after storm events.
- Conduct outreach to residents asking them to have a backpack ready with essential documents/medicines.
- Be aware of the digital divide.
  - When suggesting storing and digitally accessing documents, one participant noted that not everyone would know how to store or access the documents at a later date.



- The participant suggested that residents share documents with friends and relatives outside or in an area less affected.
- Website <https://www.familysearch.org/en/> was suggested as a digital storage.
- Participants expressed frustration with the current state of evacuation routes. Atlantic City and Brigantine currently have only one way in/out (bridge). Participants also noted frustration with the signage and wayfinding for evacuation routes. Signs are not clearly marked and are small, difficult to read and scarce. One participant suggested the evacuation signage has its own lighting system to identify the routes easily. Another participant suggested an advertising campaign to educate people about these signs and how to identify evacuation routes, etc. There should also be an “amber-alert-text-like” for the evacuation and evacuation route.

### Conclusion

Participants emphasized the need for documentation, something very particular to this group due to its immigration status. Participants also underlined the importance of mental health. The group acknowledged the potential empowerment the community has in addressing these challenges. They also highlighted the need for better signage and wayfinding for evacuation routes.

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

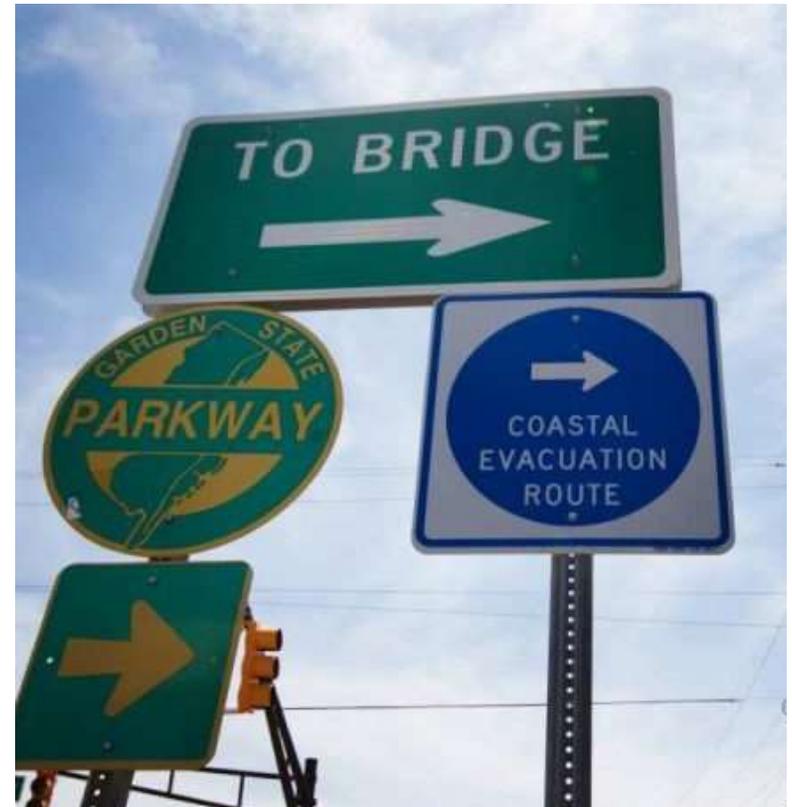
- Designated shelter for people w/ disabilities; children w/ special needs
- Power outlets for medical devices & accessible bathrooms
- Program focused on single parents
- Support services pets
- Accommodate allergies/special diets



# 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.



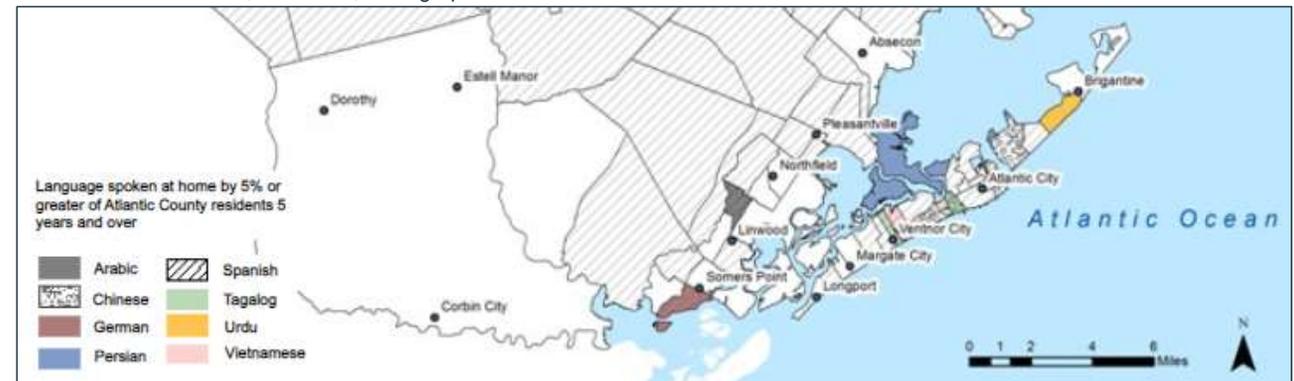
# Translate all Emergency Preparedness Materials



**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

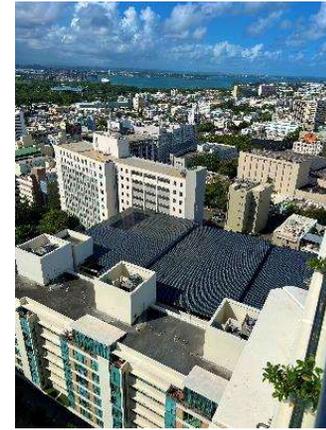
## Adaptation Action Plan for Atlantic City & Pleasantville Housing Authority Communities and the Region's Senior Centers

### 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