Community Conversation – Low Income (Round 2)
Resilient NJ – Atlantic County Coastal Region

Target: Low and lower-income residents
Date: May 25, 2022
Facilitators: Nieves Pimienta (RU-POET) and 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. Participants in this group raised issues about mental health services, hospital advocacy for ill or injured, community-level capacity to respond to disaster (rather than relying on government institutions), cyber and electrical grid security, and mistrust of policy and law enforcement as well an obstacle to effective evacuations. Detailed comments are provided below:

Health and social service needs

- One participant noted that the region needs more hospital advocacy. She is currently dealing with her mother, and it has been challenging to get advocacy for her mom. There is no Spanish-speaking staff to help a terminal patient understand their rights and situation, what is available and what is available to the family. She feels that her community is not getting the advocacy it needs when patients in the hospital need serious care. Sometimes they use translators on an app that are not 100% correct.
- This participant also noted that getting any mental health in Spanish is impossible. All mental health experts are English speakers in this area and use translators to help a patient who does not speak English. In all of Atlantic County, she could not find anyone to get mental health support for people that do not speak English.
  - o She explained that speaking through an interpreter makes it very difficult to get the depth of what you are saying through to the counselor. This is because the interpreter can't always convey depth or nuance.

- One participant noted that social services are essential to help transition through crisis, but that is not a permanent solution. The region needs to focus more on empowering people in the community to be self-sufficient and provide for themselves. Residents need to be less dependent on social services that might not be available tomorrow because of government funding. The region needs to invest in people and invest in their families.
- In case of an evacuation, patients come in and might be in a critical situation. Their family doesn't know where they are, and no one speaks Spanish to translate for them; that is a huge problem. There are a lot of issues that can come up in a disaster. Mental health and stress add to it as well. Even more important, when you are displaced, so stressful during and in the aftermath.
- Another participant reiterated the need for Spanish-speaking assistance when you need an emergency, especially a national emergency.

Community-based emergency support and response

- Another participant recommended the establishment of a non-governmental, grassroots community organization or community leader to assist during emergencies and disasters. This could be someone on every street or in a neighborhood whose role is to share information, keep people updated, and prepare them for an emergency. The participant felt that this activity should not depend on the government (where funding and resources are unpredictable) and that the community should be self-organized. His community needs an organized network of people and representatives looking out for the community – check on each other.
- Two participants discuss the need for emergency preparedness training for elementary school children. One noted that schools used to have this type of education, and we need to start doing it again. Kids need to know how to find their parents, where to go, and what to do. Schools need to have these drills so the kids can practice the quick reactions that we need to have in an emergency.

Cyber and electrical grid security

- One participant stated that he is working on an event related to emergency disaster cyber security and electric grid preparedness. He noted that cyber security and electric grid preparedness must be part of the conversation.

Mistrust of law enforcement and emergency personnel

- Finally, a participant brought up the lack of trust with police and other emergency officials. He stated that if emergency personnel try to get into a community, but that community has had issues with the police in the past, there will be mistrust, and they may not accept help and try to do it themselves. In such a case, the trained emergency personnel cannot effectively do their job. Therefore, the region must work with communities and law enforcement on the trust issue. He has heard of situations where people may need help but won't come out of their houses to speak with police or emergency personnel. This will cause challenges and complications when

trying to effectively evacuate a whole city; people will not trust that their property will be okay while they are gone.

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

- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- WSP
- Engenuity Infrastructure
- Rutgers — Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
- LocalOffice Landscape & Urban Design
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Perkins Eastman
- CDM Smith
- CHPlanning Limited

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Brigantine
- Margate City, New Jersey
- City of Northfield, New Jersey, 1905
- V
- Pleasantville
- Seal of County of Atlantic, New Jersey, 1837
- American Red Cross
- City of Atlantic City, Incorporated March 1854

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.

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?

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

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)

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.

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.
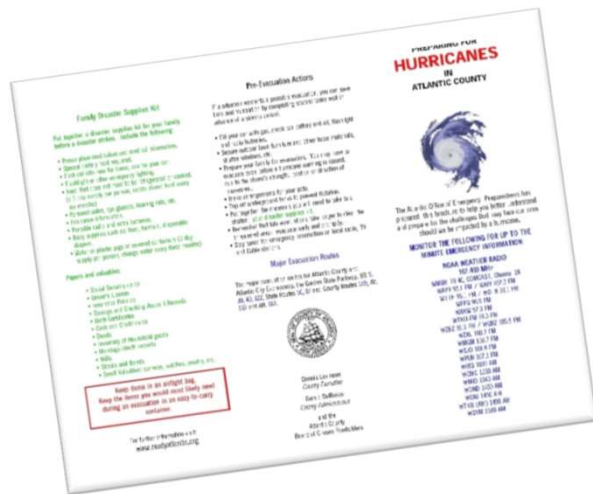
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Languages other than English spoken at home, by census track:
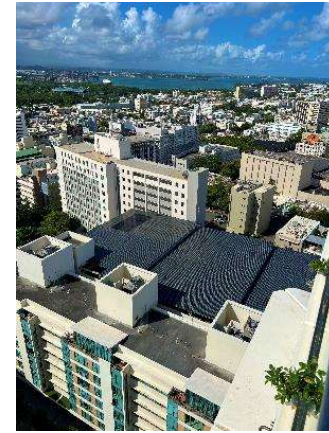Data Source: 2010 ACS, Janet Lau, Cartographer

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

Flood Mitigation
- Reprogram Ground Level

Long Term Strategies
Strategic Planning for potential redevelopment of the most vulnerable communities

Rooftop Solar

Solar Trellises

Relocated Mechanical Equipment

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**."*

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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