

CARTER CRAFT, HOBOKEN, NJ

Co-chair, Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge Community Advisory Group



From Left to Right: Mayor Dawn Zimmer with Rebuild by Design Citizens Advisory Group Co-Chairs Council President Ravinder Bhalla, Carter Craft and LaTrenda Ross

Why did you get involved?

I am a parent of three kids who saw 80% of our community flooded. As a gardener, I know how water – too little or too much – causes problems for all of us. I am also a member of the local Community Emergency Response Team and spent 8 days before, during and after Hurricane Sandy helping people who were unprepared. No one should struggle or suffer through that again.

“ Diversity of experience, culture and ethnicity helps make a community strong. ”

What has been the biggest challenge your Community Advisory Group has faced?

The biggest challenge has been structuring the process so that more people become more informed about the project. Inclusiveness has merits and, surprisingly, drawbacks. We are trying to overcome the drawbacks by encouraging people to leave enclosed meeting rooms, into the community and bringing the topic of flood protection and water management into a virtual living classrooms. We think it is necessary to organize more walking tours and bus tours so people can actually see what is being discussed, and where. Most people don't understand maps, but when you stand on the street corner and talk to them, you see how much valuable information they are able to contribute to the process.

What project aspect are you most looking forward to?

The opportunity for Rebuild by Design projects to become a part of what kids learn in school today, and what society hopefully looks back on 10-20 years from now and says, “We were right to have done it that way.”

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What has been your biggest surprise?

That diversity of experience, culture and ethnicity helps make a community strong. We talk about environmental justice, but the people attending the meetings, do not represent the racial or ethnic makeup of the project area.

What community engagement tactic has worked best?

Having informal meetings in between the formal CAG meetings. This gives us an opportunity to discuss the process and next steps in more detail. The public meetings are very carefully choreographed. They are not designed to encourage people to get involved. Putting up fliers along the waterfront and by the mail-room in apartment buildings is more effective than social or regular print media.

Fun Fact: One of nine children. Well accustomed to either stirring the pot or else trying to make peace.

Stay connected with Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge at:
nj.gov/dep/floodhazard/rbd-hudsonriver.htm

<http://www.rebuildbydesign.org/our-work/sandy-projects>

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