

# VICTORIA CERULLO, STATEN ISLAND, NY

Co-chair, Living Breakwaters Community Advisory Committee (CAC)



From Left to Right: Living Breakwaters Project Manager Alex T. Zablocki with Rebuild by Design Citizens Advisory Committee Co-Chair Victoria Cerullo

## Why did you get involved?

As a Staten Island resident who was working for the City of New York when Hurricane Sandy hit, being involved wasn't a question or an option! Rebuild by Design provided a tangible and productive way to get involved in a project that will create a better, more resilient NYC.

## Which part of the project excites you the most?

I am most excited about the added layer of protection and resilience this project is going to bring to the south shore of Staten Island. Additionally, the Billion Oyster Project's involvement has given us the opportunity to engage local restaurants, students and educators. I am looking forward to the results of those efforts both now and for the next generation of young people in the borough.

“ The local community members on the CAC do a great job pounding the pavement and talking directly to our neighbors about this project. ”

## What lessons have you learned from your involvement with the Community Advisory Committee?

This project reaffirmed something I already believed from my time in the Bloomberg Administration, but is always exciting to witness firsthand: when you bring together a group of people who care about community and an issue and work in collaboration to achieve a goal, amazing things can happen! The implementation of this project involves an unprecedented amount of cooperation between city, state, and federal government agencies, private entities and the community.

## What has been your biggest surprise?

How well all of the various government agencies, designers, consultants, technical advisers and stakeholders have worked together. This project started out through the Rebuild by Design competition as the Living Breakwaters, but due to the positive cooperation of so many and incorporation of community feedback by the State, the project has expanded into the Living Breakwaters and Tottenville Shoreline Protection Project. Along with in-water elements, the project now includes more resilient enhancements to Conference House Park including an earthen berm, dune, revetment and landscaped shoreline pathway. Together, these projects work to protect the Tottenville beach community.

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## What is biggest project challenge you faced?

The biggest challenge has been managing excitement about the end result in relation to the timing. We have held many interactive public meetings with the community where the design and engineering teams have kept the community engaged in a creative and meaningful way. Key is to keep the momentum going and explain that the design, permitting and regulatory process takes time, but the project will be constructed in the next few years and we will be there every step of the way, including the completion!

## What community engagement tactic worked best?

Door-to-door engagement has worked best for this project. The local community members on the Community Advisory Committee do a great job pounding the pavement and talking directly to their neighbors about this project. They literally know everyone! Additionally, plugging into local events, like Flagship Brewery's OysterFest in September, was a great way to spread the word to the larger Staten Island community and engage them in the shell recycling process with the Billion Oyster Project. We were able to collect over 6,000 oyster shells for Living Breakwaters.

Fun Fact: Got engaged in Grand Central Station and married in Central Park. Loves beautiful public spaces, both natural and built!

Stay connected with Living Breakwaters at:  
[stormrecovery.ny.gov/living-breakwaters-tottenville](http://stormrecovery.ny.gov/living-breakwaters-tottenville)

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

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