


CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE, & TRANSFORMATIVE: FUNDING FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES



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Every storm behaves a bit differently and every storm reveals repeated patterns of vulnerabilities that continue to put New Yorkers at risk. Hurricane Ida's record rainfall was unique, but not unexpected. In fact, such a cloudburst has been predicted for many years by experts across multiple fields. Upon the anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, nine years later, we are at a standstill on large-scale impactful resilient installations and code transformations to ensure that we can survive the growing saturation levels expected by increased hurricanes and weather events. Rain events like Hurricane Ida, can only be vastly mitigated by storm water management implemented as large-scale integrated networks, with nature based solutions to absorb, store, and direct water flows. But the urgency for such ecological transformations of our hardened built environment cannot short circuit or circumnavigate the need for true community leadership and a grass roots approach. We must prioritize the empowerment of local organizations to steer the future of their communities and be stewards who will nurture their success.

A growing number of New York City residents live within the 100-year floodplain, predicted to go from 1.3million today to 2.2-million by 2100, (Rebuild by Design,

2019) with the majority of those living in such climate vulnerable areas being low-income New Yorkers. New York City's focus must be on environmental justice communities who have disproportionately borne the burden of a variety of environmental impacts and live on the frontline of climate change.

Funding and empowering local community-based organizations who are working directly with local residents to bring plans to reality is a critical key to realizing true community resilience. Local community members have deep local knowledge that can more accurately guide the best design directions for social, ecological, and economic

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transformations. RISE and Rockaway residents have created the Greater Rockaway Waterfront Vision 2020, UPROSE and the Sunset Park community have created the GRID, Hunt's Point South Bronx and Bronx residents have created the Community Resiliency Agenda, Red Hook and its residents have created a vision for an integrated flood protection system and the 197A-plan, and yet these action oriented proposals are not driving the implementation of actual resilience. There is no need to start from zero, there is a high level of advanced deeply integrated planning and design created by community members that can positively reimagine these low-income low-lying communities.

A key to the success of realizing such community based planning efforts is funding. New York State's Mother Nature Bond Act has been put back on the ballot for the November 2022 general election for approval, where \$3 billion could provide critical dedicated dollars for such nature based network solutions needed for the implementation of blue-green infrastructure. This is an important funding stream that must be enacted and will be the first of its kind for the State and nation. The move towards softer, plant-based absorptive water storage can drastically support our urban spaces with a wide variety of multiple benefits, from heat island mitigation to mental health. But the funding must support our residents in greatest need and should lift into action these viable visions that are creative, innovative, and transformative. Guaranteeing the resilient futures of these communities assures the resilience of New York and is at the heart of how NYC must adapt for climate change.