



Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice

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ADAMS ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES “RAINPROOF NYC,” PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR INCREASED HEAVY RAINFALL

Partnership Brings Together City Agencies, Non-Profits, and Thought Leaders in Climate Change to Develop Innovative Policies and Creative Solutions

Group’s Recommendations will Complement Ongoing Work to Advance Stormwater Solutions and Inform Forthcoming Stormwater Strategy Promised in “PlaNYC”

NEW YORK – To address increased heavy rainfall in New York City, the Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and New York City Housing Recovery Operations, along with Rebuild by Design and One Architecture & Urbanism, have launched “Rainproof NYC,” a collaborative initiative that will bring together government agencies, non-profits, and an array of stakeholders to further develop innovative policies and programs aimed at addressing the challenges New York City faces as climate change causes increased heavy rain.

The recommendations put forth by this effort will complement the multi-billion-dollar projects DEP and other agencies already have underway to advance stormwater solutions, including [sewers](#), [green infrastructure](#), [cloudburst](#) projects and [Bluebelts](#). They will also be taken into consideration in DEP’s forthcoming stormwater flood adaptation plan and the program the city is launching to explore housing mobility and land acquisition options, both of which were laid out in [PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#), the Adams administration’s holistic climate plan, which focuses on real, impactful actions to make things happen, including leveraging unprecedented federal funding. Climate change presents a real threat to New York City and the 8.3 million New Yorkers who call it home and since day one, the Adams administration has been focused on better preparing for these more extreme weather patterns.

“New Yorkers are at risk every time there is heavy rain. In the face of these events, which are only becoming more frequent and intense, ‘Rainproof NYC’ presents an extraordinary opportunity to rethink our city’s physical and social infrastructure to not only protect all New Yorkers but also create benefits for them,” said **Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice Executive Director Elijah Hutchinson**. “Environmental threats are coming at us from all angles, and we must be innovating ways to incorporate natural features into our built environment.”

“Increased rainfall is increasingly impacting New Yorkers’ way of life, and addressing the climate crisis must be a collaborative process that involves not only experts and elected officials, but also the community members who are directly impacted,” said **Chief Climate Officer and DEP Commissioner Rohit T. Aggarwala**. “Creating community-specific solutions will allow us to more quickly fight the impacts of climate change. Working groups like this that involve community members who are directly involved in the work are a useful complement to the technical work.”

The process will consist of three working groups focused on addressing gaps in infrastructure and risk management to protect from and prepare New Yorkers for more intense precipitation; what an equitable buyout program looks like for New York City; and how can we build capacity among communities, the private sector, and community-based organizations to share the responsibility of managing increased heavy rainfall.

“One of the biggest lessons learned after Hurricane Sandy was that the city needs to have a housing mobility program on hand to deploy immediately after a storm,” said **Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery Operations Executive Director Rudy S. Giuliani**. “We are looking forward to working together now in ‘blue skies’ with stakeholders, including nonprofit organizations, academic experts, and leaders from communities impacted by flooding to develop an equitable buyout program to give homeowners a chance to sell climate-disaster-prone houses, so that New York City is ready next time.”

“Creating a comprehensive approach to addressing increased heavy rain will require that all New Yorkers play their part,” said **Amy Chester, managing director, Rebuild by Design**. “We designed ‘Rainproof NYC’ to bring together all New Yorkers - nonprofit, community, public and private - to help turn NYC into a sponge. When we are all at the table, we can design policies that help us all, regardless of if it’s a sunny day or the worst storm we have ever experienced.”

“When it rains, every building, every lot, and every open space gets wet,” said **Matthijs Bouw, founding principal, One Architecture & Urbanism**. “And, for managing extreme rainfall, every drop counts. Rainproofing our city is a responsibility we all share. We are extremely happy to see this process, with its broad range of agencies, stakeholders and communities collaborating on finding solutions, kick off its next phase.”

Over the last ten years, DEP has invested approximately \$5.7 billion to upgrade the city’s drainage systems. The department plans to nearly double that investment to \$10.3 billion in the next decade to bring more of these drainage upgrades online even faster. Looking forward, DEP is working to finalize a plan to expand sewer capacity in chronic flooding areas across the city and to install more green infrastructure to retain stormwater. This process is a multi-year effort that takes careful planning, detailed analysis, and serious consideration of how water rates will be impacted.

In 2022, the Adams administration announced [Rainfall Ready NYC](#), which includes commitments from the city and advice for homeowners and other residents about what to do in preparation for, immediately before, during, and after storms.

Working groups membership is split between representatives from city agencies and community leaders from a diverse list of organizations that represent a dozen neighborhood organizations, over 20 local, state and federal nonprofits, and the private sector. Participants were identified last

month through a public open call application and selected based on their lived or professional expertise, diversity, and whether they bring a new perspective to the conversation.

Members include the Environmental Defense Fund; Waterfront Alliance; Riders Alliance; East New York Community Land Trust; Coney Island Beautification Project; We Stay/Nos Quedamos; the Far Rockaway Arverne Nonprofit Coalition; New York Disaster Interfaith Services; NYU Langone Health; and Arup. They will utilize stakeholder input, expert advice, and best practices from other localities such as Buy-In Community Planning to inform programmatic components and create a replicable model of community and government collaboration in policy design.

They will work with representatives from nearly 20 government agencies, across multiple sectors, including the Department of Transportation; New York City Department of Parks & Recreation; New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development; New York City Emergency Management; and NYC Small Business Services as well as partners from the state and federal governments. You can find a full list of working group members [here](#).

The working groups will be co-facilitated by an agency lead and a non-profit partner – the Regional Plan Association, The Center for New York City Neighborhoods and Green City Force – who will meet regularly until this summer to create a deeper understanding of the intersection of increasing rainfall with climate justice, adaptation, housing, economic impacts, mental health, and social resilience, along with local challenges and existing and new programmatic solutions.

“As the impacts of climate change continue to worsen, extreme rainfall and flash floods will occur even more frequently in New York City neighborhoods, stressing our infrastructure to breaking points, and threatening the viability of our communities,” said **Robert Freudenberg, vice president, Energy & Environment for Regional Plan Association**. “By working with a diverse coalition to advance a vision with specific actions, ‘Rainproof NYC’ offers the opportunity to imagine a different future for our city; one where new policies and investments in adaptation not only reduce the risks of flooding but make our neighborhoods even better places to live.”

“New Yorkers have witnessed first-hand how extreme weather has re-shaped our city,” said **Christie Peale, CEO/executive director, Center for NYC Neighborhoods**. “The work of Rainproof NYC is so important because storms like Hurricane Ida and Superstorm Sandy laid bare our vulnerabilities and showed what homeowners require to recover and rebuild. Convening this dedicated and diverse set of New Yorkers will help us all be ready for future storms and protect our neighbors and communities with resourceful, innovative solutions.”

“‘Rainproof NYC’ is a holistic approach to solving New York’s ever-growing challenges with heavy rainfall and flooding,” said **Tonya Gayle, executive director, Green City Force**. “An inclusive process that has stakeholders from across the city ranging in socio economic background, geography, skill set, and demographic is a productive plan toward inclusive and sustainable solutions for all New Yorkers.”

The working groups will use the findings from last year’s [Rainproof Symposium](#), which was convened in March to workshop solutions to drive policy and practices towards a rainproof NYC, as their guide. This initial process, carried out by Rebuild by Design, One Architecture & Urbanism, DEP, and MOCEJ, found diverse sectors are eager to solve these issues together to

ensure New Yorkers can thrive in the face of increasing heavy rainfall. The flash flooding the city experienced on September 29, 2023, only served to underscore the need for work such as this.

“Flooding from heavy rains and other sources threatens lives, our ability to get to work, and the safety of our homes,” said **Kate Boicourt, director of climate resilient coasts and watersheds, Environmental Defense Fund**. “We can't wait any longer to act on building resilience in New York City. ‘Rainproof NYC’ is an opportunity to take collective action by bringing together stakeholders within and outside of New York City government to build a strategy for a resilient NYC.”

“‘Rainproof NYC’ is an exciting opportunity to confront complex climate challenges across our five boroughs,” said **Tyler Taba, director of resilience, Waterfront Alliance**. “With collaboration and commitment from residents and leaders in communities, local government, community-based and non-profit organizations, and private sector firms, these working groups bring together a diverse set of partners who share the goal of creating equitable solutions to our rainfall and broader flood risks.”

“Improving the city’s public infrastructure has the potential to mitigate the effects of climate change while strengthening local communities,” said **Akemi Sato, director of programs, Design Trust for Public Space**. “‘Rainproof NYC’ can integrate diverse talents and experiences into actionable ways to shift our relationship with water abundance.”

“Climate change is not just a threat to New York City but an invitation to change,” said **Eric W. Sanderson, vice president for urban conservation, New York Botanical Garden**. “The scale of adaptation which flooding will require is also our opportunity to address long-standing issues of environmental justice, affordable housing, and sustainable transportation.”

“Now is the time for us all to come together and take action for climate adaptation,” said **Thaddeus Pawlowski, managing director, Columbia University, Center for Resilient Cities and Landscapes**. “We live in a city built for the climate of 100 years ago. We need to make it work for everyone for generations to come.”

“Extreme weather events have become the new norm in New York City in the past decade — devastating our communities, infrastructure, and economy,” said **Rona Taylor, executive director, Central x South East Brooklyn CDC**. “The frequency and immensity are a direct correlation to the worsening climate crisis that threatens our future. There is no time like the present to collaborate with diverse communities and city agencies to rainproof NYC. The Central x South East Brooklyn CDC is excited to be a part of these critical conversations and collaborative efforts. Together, we can educate and build the capacity of our neighbors to withstand the increasing rainfall, ultimately preserving lives and communities.”

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