

TALKING RESILIENCE: NYC



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The Municipal Art Society of New York
MASNYC

Introduction

Since Superstorm Sandy struck the Northeast coast almost three years ago, City, State, and Federal agencies, hundreds of organizations, and thousands of individuals have mobilized to aid affected communities in their recovery efforts, increase preparedness, and develop new ways to make New York City and the surrounding region more resilient.

MAS has long advocated that the resilience of urban areas – including their built, natural, social, and economic infrastructure – is strongly linked to the everyday livability of neighborhoods and the cities they comprise. The same shared spaces that provide everyday opportunities for social interactions and chance encounters that foster neighborhood cohesion, cultural understanding, a sense of belonging, the ability to source the ingenuity of others, and advance economic pursuits – our civic assets – are particularly critical in communities battling ongoing stresses and acute shocks.

Since Superstorm Sandy, MAS has been at the forefront of the post-Sandy effort to connect civil society leaders, government officials, grassroots community organizers, academics, and a host of other community leaders and urban practitioners through forums, convenings, and other programs. These dialogues fostered comprehensive and early conversations around the lessons learned from the Sandy response.

Starting in the spring of 2015, MAS has worked with local partners and City, State, and Federal agencies to identify challenges to and develop next steps for city-wide community based resilience building.



All Hands On Deck: Mobilizing New Yorkers for a Livable and Resilient City, October 2013



MAS Community-Based Resilience Convening, Staten Island, April 2015



MAS Community-Based Resilience Convening, The Bronx, May 2015

MAS Community-Based Resilience Convenings

Beginning in April 2015, MAS worked with local partners including the Long Term Recovery Organization in Staten Island, Urban Upbound in Queens, Public Service Action in the Bronx, and the Kings Bay Y in Brooklyn to bring leaders from local community and faith-based organizations, businesses, and service providers together to discuss successes, identify persistent challenges, and develop a shared city-wide framework for support of community-based resilience building efforts.

RESILIENCE PLANNING

- Participants expressed concern about the decreased sense of urgency around resilience planning and a lack of retention of lessons learned.
- There are inequities within the recovery process; those still in “recovery mode” may not be engaged in resilience building efforts. There is concern that the same people not being engaged in and served by disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts are being excluded from resilience planning.
- Communities are not homogenous entities, and resilience building efforts should be tailored to local cultures and conditions. Recovery and resilience initiatives should be developed by and with the communities they impact. Place-based coordinated efforts between organizations within a community are important to identify and work towards shared goals and metrics.
- Resilience must also be approached on a regional level and does not stop at the five boroughs. Efforts need to be both long term and short term so that there are visible signs of change. Additionally, flood mitigation strategies alone, such as raising houses, are not sufficient to build resilience.

FUNDING

- Participants expressed concern about the closure of key recovery programs, the affordability of flood insurance, and competition for funding in vulnerable communities.
- Funding earmarked for disaster recovery has a finite timeline, and current funding models are not conducive to long-term planning.
- Increased flood insurance costs, stemming from the new and expanded Federal Emergency Management Agency flood maps, are not affordable for most citizens in recovering neighborhoods.
- Social, economic, and political interests are forced to compete for funding in vulnerable communities.

COMMUNITY NETWORKS & RESOURCES

- Participants emphasized the importance of organizations and institutions which have pre-existing and long-standing relationships within communities and gathering places.
- A strong network of community based organizations is crucial to increasing the social cohesion that aids in strengthening resilience. It is important for the City to understand these networks so that greater communication and collaboration can be achieved. These local entities can help identify and mobilize existing leadership within community networks during times of stress.
- Everyday civic assets become resource and information hubs during and following a disaster, and can serve to build resilience on an ongoing basis. Participants identified a wide variety of spaces, including: hospitals, parks, community centers, food pantries, universities, libraries, high schools, plazas, churches, fields, nonprofit service organizations, warehouses, bars, bodegas, offices, firehouses, and residents’ homes as gathering places and hubs.

COMMUNICATION

- Better communication and collaboration between City agencies, community-based organizations, and people in communities is critical to strengthening New York City’s urban resilience. Communication efforts need to be long term and revolve around trust building. Lack of coordination and communication creates “recovery fatigue”.
- There is a challenge in getting the word out about recovery and resilience initiatives, and providing critical information to vulnerable and marginalized populations, including the elderly, people with mobility, mental, and physical health issues, and people facing language barriers.
- Utilizing digital forms of communication is important, but the digital layer cannot replace face-to-face communication.



Talking Resilience: NYC, September 2015

Talking Resilience: NYC

Building on what was learned at the *MAS Community-Based Resilience Convenings*, MAS hosted *Talking Resilience: NYC*, a city-wide event in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, New America, Enterprise Community Partners, Rebuild by Design, and AIA's Design for Risk Reduction Committee. This event brought participants from the *MAS Community-Based Resilience Convenings* together with the broader MAS resilience network of designers, planners, architects, policy makers, and City, State, and Federal agency representatives to discuss next steps and hear updates on city-wide resilience planning.

Talking Resilience: NYC served as a platform for the City to share its application for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). The City's proposed project, "Protect and Connect," will focus on coastal resilience in Lower Manhattan. This project aims to integrate physical and social resilience into the diverse communities of Lower Manhattan and Two Bridges through physical projects, programs, and policies that will provide integrated flood protection to maintain the social and economic viability of neighborhoods while investing in resilient affordable housing by adapting building systems and neighborhood infrastructure to protect homes from climate stressors.

A series of facilitated discussions in the afternoon provided opportunities for advocates and residents of the neighborhoods that would be impacted by the plan to weigh in. Participants felt that in order to increase resilience, there needs to be an increase in communication and collaboration between all parties. Additionally, there is a strong interest to make sure that waterfront access is maintained and enhanced. Suggestions for improvement include: active retail and concession while preserving natural space, seasonal activation with food trucks or farmers market, spaces that cater to both locals and tourists, and ecological and sustainable educational programming.

MAS Post Sandy Resilience Initiatives

Talking Resilience: NYC

September 29th 2015

Representatives from City, State, and Federal agencies shared updates and answered questions about their work to protect the city from acute shocks and chronic stresses. The City presented its Phase 2 application for the National Disaster Resilience Competition.

MAS Community-Based Resilience Convenings

March 2015- May 2015

In the spring of 2015 MAS worked with local partners in four boroughs to bring together members of community-based neighborhood organizations and local business, nonprofit and faith communities to discuss successes since Sandy, identify persistent challenges and develop a shared framework for support of community-based resilience work city-wide.

All Hands on Deck: Mobilizing New Yorkers for a Livable and Resilient New York

December 2013

In December of 2013 MAS released All Hands on Deck: Mobilizing New Yorkers for a Livable and Resilient City. The report outlined a policy and planning framework for creating a livable and resilient city, proposing four key principles to guide our resilience efforts – transparency, scalability, collaboration, and inclusivity – and four priorities for action moving forward: mobilizing existing resources and diverse expertise; strengthening local capabilities; investing in flexible and adaptive infrastructure; and establishing urban policies that foster resilience through local innovation.

Rebuild by Design

August 2013 - June 2014

MAS was a lead partner on the federal Rebuild by Design competition. Launched by the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task force, with lead funding by The Rockefeller Foundation, the Rebuild by Design competition sought to inspire innovative and out-of-the-box solutions to protect communities from future storms. Ten design teams worked with MAS, the New York University's Institute for Public Knowledge, Van Alen Institute, and the Regional Plan Association, to understand the resilience challenges the region faces.

The Road Forward: Putting Resilience into Action

June 19th 2013

Following the release of the SIRR report, MAS hosted The Road Forward: Putting Resilience into Action, providing a forum for the SIRR team to present their recommendations, and an opportunity for stakeholders and resilience practitioners to take a critical look at those recommendations and discuss strategies and for implementation and community engagement.

Mayor's Special Initiative for Rebuilding & Resiliency (SIRR)

Community Workshops

March 6th - 19th & April 24th 2013

MAS supported the NYC Mayor's Special Initiative for Rebuilding & Resiliency outreach program by helping to recruit over 150 volunteer facilitators for 11 community-based workshops conducted in key neighborhoods affected by Sandy. These workshops provided a step for affected communities to discuss their priorities for rebuilding.

MASNYC Resilience Roundtables

February 2013 - October 2014

Immediately following Sandy, MAS began to convene monthly and then quarterly Resilience Roundtables to provide a forum for information sharing concerning the various parallel and cross-coordinated resilience planning efforts occurring throughout New York, and to provide an opportunity to work together.

Charting the Road to Resilience: From the Ground Up

January 11th - 12th 2013

Beginning with community-led site visits in neighborhoods impacted by Sandy, and followed by a day-long convening of plenaries and working discussion groups hosted at The New School, this convening fostered a broad, comprehensive, early conversation around the lessons learned from the Sandy response.

Fostering Urban Resilience and Innovation

December 14th 2012

Bringing together a consortium of innovators, academics and foundation leaders from leading urban-focused organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, MAS organized Fostering Urban Resilience and Innovation to discuss the challenges of merging the urban livability and resilience agendas in cities across North America.

New York City Sink or Swim: Principles and Priorities for Waterfront Restoration in a Post-Sandy Era

December 13th 2012

Less than two months after Sandy, MAS joined with the Center for Urban Real Estate (CURE) at Columbia University to co-host New York City Sink or Swim: Principles and Priorities for Waterfront Restoration in a Post-Sandy Era. Keynote speakers from the U.S. Federal government and the Netherlands Delta Commission presented ideas for technical infrastructure and financial strategies to mitigate the effects of future 'shocks'.

MOBILIZE EXISTING RESOURCES AND DIVERSE EXPERTISE
Harness the availability of funding streams, local energy and expertise, and global best practices to develop effective local solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement and comprehensive outreach to involve all community member in the resilience building process.
- 2 Establish transparent and coordinated communication for allocating disaster-relief and rebuilding resources to ensure an equitable and efficient process to building resilience.
- 3 Combine global "best practices," with local innovation and expertise to make New York City a model for resilience.

FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE

This Framework for Resilience is representative of the diverse voices – academic, community groups, planning and design community, public agencies and officials, and private organizations – active in the recovery since Superstorm Sandy. It lays out four key priority areas – mobilizing existing resources, increasing local capacity, investing in adaptable infrastructure, and updating new policy to sustain resilience, – and includes a series of recommendations to help achieve these 'Priorities for Creating a Livable and Resilient New York City.'

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

TRANSPARENCY: As New York City faces the wide-ranging challenges exposed by Sandy, transparency is vital for rebuilding effectively and efficiently, for coordinating various recovery efforts and fostering a sense of trust and ownership between communities and governmental leaders.

COLLABORATION: There must be cross-coordination between various streams of recovery efforts to instill resilience in the New York City's urban fabric. Neither excellence nor efficiency happens in silos. We are calling for all hands on deck to ensure that the best, smartest, and most effective tools and pathways for resilience are identified and applied.

INCLUSIVITY: A resilient approach to rebuilding includes economic, cultural, social, and environmental perspectives that create adaptable systems and vibrant communities. Overlapping initiatives from varying disciplines and perspectives prepares our city's communities and neighborhoods for unanticipated pressures by creating redundancies, strengthening social networks and focusing on the long-term livability and resilience of our city.

SCALABILITY: By approaching resilience at all levels, there is the opportunity to create multiple layers of defense and ensure opportunities for 'a'; hands on deck' to tangibly participate in resilience. Providing options for resilience at varying levels of investment and duration, and at different scales, can make resilience building accessible to all, regardless of income, geography, or scope of time.

INVEST IN FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE
Strengthen urban systems with innovative design, strategic redundancies and both soft and hard approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Strengthen transportation network with various methods and routes of transportation.
- 2 Develop innovative and scalable solutions to how we rebuild, with special attention paid to public housing.
- 3 Continue to restore the City's natural infrastructure along the waterfront and beyond.
- 4 Invest in strategic planning and improvements for telecommunication infrastructure.

PRIORITIES FOR CREATING A LIVABLE AND RESILIENT NEW YORK CITY

STRENGTHEN LOCAL CAPABILITIES
Strengthen the local capacity of our neighborhoods to respond and adapt to shocks of all kinds – economic, social, cultural, and environmental.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Equip the general public with skills, tools, and technology that reinforce community-driven resiliency.
- 2 Allow communities to be the drivers of their resilience plans.
- 3 Create Community Hubs that provide resources and programs as well as strengthen the overall social infrastructure of neighborhoods.
- 4 Preserve and reinforce community strengths by involving place-makers, preservationists, and the arts and cultural community into planning and policy decisions.
- 5 Prioritize action based on the preexisting and ongoing vulnerabilities of New York City's neighborhoods.

PRIORITIES FOR CREATING A LIVABLE AND RESILIENT NEW YORK CITY

LEAD WITH POLICIES THAT SUSTAIN RESILIENCE
Develop policy that informs future resilience planning and creates a culture of resilience throughout the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Create a culture of readiness by educating the public and partnering with organizations to raise awareness about resilience.
- 2 Develop a long-term planning process for coastal properties.
- 3 Reform zoning and building codes to incorporate resilience and promote livability.
- 4 Take a regional approach to resilience planning.

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In December 2013, MAS released *All Hands On Deck: Mobilizing New Yorkers for a Livable and Resilient City*. The document outlined a framework for resilience, including: mobilizing existing resources and diverse expertise, strengthening local capabilities, investing in flexible and adaptive infrastructure, and leading with policies that sustain resilience.



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CHARTING THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE FROM THE GROUND UP

Principles for Moving Forward in a post-Sandy New York City

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In January 2013, MAS hosted its first city-wide convening on urban resilience.

Thank You to Our Partners





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