DELIVERING OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES CASE STUDY: A MODEL FOR INTERAGENCY COORDINATION
LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK (2012-2016)

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

- October 2012: Hurricane Sandy hit the U.S. mid-Atlantic coast
- The storm damaged or destroyed 95,534 buildings in Nassau and Suffolk Counties
- Almost 118,000 individuals and households in NY were approved for assistance to help with housing and disaster-related expenses

THE CHALLENGE

Hurricane Sandy was the deadliest and most destructive hurricane of the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season and the second-costliest hurricane in U.S. history. It hit the mid-Atlantic coast in October and overwhelmed the existing storm and wastewater infrastructure. Sandy also exacerbated existing threats to Long Island, including rising sea levels, stronger and more frequent natural hazard events, saltwater intrusion, dependence on a sole-source aquifer for drinking water and non-point source pollution.

Hurricane Sandy's impact crossed county, regional and state lines. To help communities in New York and New Jersey recover and rebuild, federal and state entities that did not normally collaborate needed to work together to address a multitude of issues that were typically handled independently through different government authorities.

Created in 2011, the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) identified an approach that would optimally engage existing federal resources and incorporate the full capabilities of local and state entities. In early 2013, just months after Sandy, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery Support Function (CPCB RSF), and the New York State Department of State formed the Long Island Smart Growth Resilience Partnership (Partnership). Other group members included the Suffolk County Economic Development and Planning Office, Nassau County Department of Public Works and Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The group had two challenges to address. The first was to provide coordinated and long-term federal assistance to affected communities. The second was to engage stakeholders, especially those in environmental justice, to implement recovery efforts in a way that would result in sustainable and resilient communities rather than just replacing what was there before the storm.

CORE PARTNERS

Members of Smart Growth Resilience Partnership

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
    - Sandy Recovery Office

    - FEMA Region 2
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
    - EPA Region 2
    - Office of Sustainable Communities
- Suffolk County, Long Island, NY Economic Development and Planning
- Nassau County, Long Island, NY Department of Public Works and Planning
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)/Long Island Railroad (Transit-Oriented Development)
- New York State
    - Department of State, Smart Growth Office
    - Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Climate Change

ADDITIONAL PARTNERS

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
    - Office of Research and Development
- New York State
    - Department of State, Office of Planning and Development *(Ecosystem Services Assessment, Technical Assistance)*
    - Governor's Office of Storm Recovery *(Technical Assistance)*
- SUNY Stony Brook University *(Ecosystem Services Assessment, Health Impact Assessment)*
- Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Institute Touro Law Center *(Technical Assistance)*
- The Nature Conservancy *(Ecosystem Services Assessment, Health Impact Assessment)*

EXERCISE

The charge of the Partnership was to develop and incorporate a set of regional goals for smart growth, environmental justice, resiliency and hazard mitigation concepts, health indicators and science into the recovery process for Suffolk and Nassau counties. The team needed to build on existing local efforts, align with New York State policies and programs and establish strong intergovernmental coordination. In your assigned small groups, please discuss:

- What is the first thing you would do to understand the community's needs?
- What are the current challenges and anticipated barriers? What approach can you take to overcome them?
- What federal agencies and resources should come into play?
- What would be important to support long-term sustainability of the project outcomes? What could be recommended as broader policy or program changes across the government?

ACTUAL STEPS TAKEN

1. The Partnership knew early on that a regional strategy that engaged both Long Island counties would be most effective, even though it would be a different approach than the typical recovery process. They broadened the focus to include resilient rebuilding in lower risk inland areas

(e.g., areas outside of the FEMA-identified flood hazard areas). This tactic created awareness and opportunities to tackle long-term recovery and resilience issues, such as environmental justice, which were bigger than what one community could handle on its own. By using high-quality data, they could facilitate work around growth patterns for communities wanting to engage.

2. The most important first step for the six core members of the Smart Growth Resilience Partnership was to establish the main recovery issues encompassing all points of view. The group created white papers with an understanding of existing regional priorities, an analysis of the storm's immediate impacts and anticipated future needs based on best available data. The white papers were key in gaining support from leadership and leveraging available resources that would make this partnership a success.

3. EPA and FEMA quickly discovered they would need to leverage each other's authorities and resources to be effective. For example, in May 2014, EPA was able to hire a facilitator to help develop a recovery symposium, to discuss the available data and issues identified in the white papers. The symposium, "Accepting the Tide: A Roundtable Discussion on Integrating Smart Growth and Resilience on a Post-Sandy Long Island," featured two especially crucial stakeholders: Jamie Rubin, Director of the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, and Steve Bellone, Suffolk County Executive—both of whom were leaders and agents of change for the recovery process at their respective level of government. More than 90 stakeholders participated, including local elected officials, municipal employees, nonprofit workers and people affiliated with the designated New York Rising Community Reconstruction areas. Through the symposium, the team was able to identify community needs and stakeholder resources that would expedite the recovery process. This led to partnerships with academics and an agreement to use local graduate students to assist with research in recovery and resiliency.

4. During this timeframe, New York, using HUD Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding, undertook a local recovery planning process. Partnership members from New York State Department of State and FEMA were directly involved in this process and were able to use the resulting plans to inform future Partnership projects.

5. After identifying the needs and goals of the region, the team focused on how they could use the complimentary resources of FEMA and EPA in the implementation process. FEMA and EPA expedited the process of delivering funding and technical assistance to communities by using EPA infrastructure already in place (e.g., Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Fellowship program). As a result, FEMA was able to integrate resilience earlier in the recovery process by providing funding for work that often occurs at the end of recovery.

UNIQUE OUTCOMES

- FEMA and EPA worked together to offer trainings on Health Impact Assessments (HIA), community engagement and environmental justice to bolster the ongoing federal operation and improve communication with the state and local governments.

- The Long Island Smart Growth Resilience Partnership is paving the way for Long Island to be a national model for sustainable, resilient infrastructure recovery and rebuilding. The Smart Growth Initiative involves four projects that leverage funding and programs from several agencies and organizations: 1) Resilient Zoning and Building Codes 2) Ecosystem Service Valuation 3) Health Impact Assessment and 4) CommunityViz scenario planning.
    1. Zoning: The Partnership identified a need for technical assistance on resilient building and zoning codes to Sandy-impacted communities on Long Island. While FEMA is limited to acting in an advisory role for disaster-resistant building and zoning codes, EPA had programmatic infrastructure in place to provide direct technical assistance. Through an Interagency Agreement (IAA), FEMA committed funding to have EPA implement this program for the disaster-impacted areas. An EPA/FEMA guidance document will be developed, in consultation with New York State, for use by other impacted communities in New York and throughout the nation. Additionally, the Partnership is coordinating with Touro Land Use Law Institute to provide additional support to selected communities and assist in recommendation implementation.
    2. Ecosystem Service Valuation: The Partnership is leveraging commitments from FEMA, EPA, Stony Brook University and the Nature Conservancy for an Ecosystem Services Valuation project. This project is identifying the value Long Island communities derive from the goods and services provided by nature. This will guide them as they make recovery and redevelopment decisions and implement projects identified through the New York Rising Community Reconstruction plans.
    3. Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Another way that the Partnership sought to bring good science and data to the table was through an HIA, which provides information to local governments to highlight the positive and negative impacts on public health from a particular project, plan or policy. An assessment for Suffolk County is being conducted on a local ordnance change that would impact on-site sewage systems and nearby wetlands. Understanding the health impacts associated with flooding of these septic systems is crucial in planning for resilience in these communities. EPA's commitment of resources (full-time employees and contractor hours), along with funding from FEMA, made the assessment possible. The HIA team launched the project in December 2014 and held stakeholder meetings in March 2015.
    4. CommunityViz: In January 2015, the Partnership hosted a workshop for communities on CommunityViz, a participatory scenario-planning tool for local planning and decision-making. FEMA recovery funds and EPA's mission contract made the workshop possible, with the latter expediting access to recovery funds. The training integrated data from NOAA's sea-level rise tool, EPA's EJScreen Screening and Mapping tool, FEMA HAZUS and U.S. Census Bureau and local land-use data.

- In 2014, the State of New York passed the 2014 Community Risk and Resiliency Act (CRRA) requiring municipalities to incorporate resiliency in their planning process in 2017 in order to be eligible for state financial assistance. Because of the actions taken under this Partnership, as well as other ongoing efforts, Long Island will be equipped to comply with CRRA.

UNIFYING THEMES

- Federal interagency coordination in the field facilitates effective engagement with state and local partners. A symposium or development of "thought pieces" (such as white papers) can bring stakeholders together around broad concepts before diving in to specific solutions where existing equities may be on the line.
- The state and local governments are key partners in any recovery effort, as are local universities and nonprofits.
- Federal agencies have distinct assets and can be of far more assistance when they collaborate to share those assets with communities.
- Outcomes are most readily achieved when each entity is willing to allow others to take credit for the collective work needs dictate.
- Understanding and respecting each agency's priorities is critical.
- Recovery and mitigation planning is a cycle; what is done in recovery planning should feed into the mitigation plan. Planners and emergency managers can be most effective when they are partners from the outset; planning requires whole community participation.
- Science and data are key components to a recovery process that is looking towards resiliency and sustainability.
- Bringing science-based, data-driven digital tools to the community and teaching them how to use the tools is an efficient way to build capacity and generate buy-in for best practice solutions.
- Taking time off for a cup of coffee together helps build trust and the relationships needed to work through challenges.

FEATURED HIGH-VALUE RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES

- EPA/FEMA Memorandum of Agreement to explore opportunities to incorporate sustainability and smart growth practices into communities' hazard mitigation planning and long term disaster recovery efforts, and to incorporate hazards resilience into smart growth assistance for communities (see: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/2011_0114_fema-epa-moa.pdf). This MOA inspired a larger MOA now signed by 16 federal agencies to collaborate on federal Technical Assistance. (http://communitysolutions.sites.usa.gov/2016/04/13/memorandum-of-agreement-to-collaborate-on-technical-assistance/).
- The National Disaster Recovery Framework: http://1.usa.gov/1WvaW6n
- CommunityViz scenario-planning tool for smart growth: http://bit.ly/1SUG2Fc
- Health and Impact Assessment (HIA): http://1.usa.gov/1TjjcBt
- Ecosystem Services Assessment: http://1.usa.gov/1SP2MTR
- EPA's Conflict Resolution and Dispute Services contract: https://www.epa.gov/adr/conflict-prevention-and-resolution-services-contract
- NOAA Sea-level rise tool: http://1.usa.gov/1WvblWd
- EPA's EJ screening tool: http://1.usa.gov/23Ltsd4
- FEMA HAZUS tool: http://1.usa.gov/1NFOTbA
- EPA's ongoing technical assistance programs: http://1.usa.gov/26AGJYd

PICTURES/LINKS/NEWSCLIPS/WORKING PAPERS WORTH HIGHLIGHTING

- http://1.usa.gov/1WXk1FB
- http://1.usa.gov/1rnsUfp