



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**Public Hearing  
before  
The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery  
on the  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
National Disaster Resilience Competition Phase 1 Application  
New York State Community Development Block Grant  
Disaster Recovery Action Plan  
25 Beaver Street, New York, NY  
March 16, 2015 at 6:00 P.M.**

My name is Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson of Community Board 1 (CB1). Our Community district includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge and it bounded by both the East River and Hudson River. CB1 would like to thank the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) for holding this critical public hearing on its National Disaster Resilience Competition Application (NDRC) for Phase 1 of the New York State Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Action Plan to fund and to promote a long-term resilient recovery in New York State.

At a height of seven feet, CB1 experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan, resulting in the drowning of two people in our district as well as extreme property and financial damage. While great strides have been made in CB1 in terms of recovery and relief, there is still much that must be done to rebuild and revitalize what was destroyed, and to protect the area in anticipation of future extreme weather events.

Lower Manhattan is in desperate need of immediate resiliency and hardening measures. Existing plans for such measures, such as the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee, are long-term projects that will not effectively protect Lower Manhattan for several decades. Resiliency plans for Lower Manhattan were included in the Rebuild by Design BIG U proposal, but \$335 million in allocated funding is only for the first phase of the project, spanning the coast of Manhattan from East 23rd Street to Montgomery Street, all north of the CB1 area. The BIG U proposal contains plans for resiliency infrastructure in "Compartment 3", from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery in Community District 1. This proposal includes "Berms in the Battery" at the southern tip of Manhattan, "strategically located so as to protect the ducts of the infrastructure below and create a continuous protective upland landscape" as well as flood protection in the Financial District which would help protect against massive potential damages, including critical infrastructure underneath (BIG U proposal). On June 24, 2014, Community Board 1 unanimously passed a resolution urging, "HUD to allocate dedicated funding for both study and implementation of this phase of the BIG U project."

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We understand that, “Through the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC), GOSR will build upon the State’s ongoing investment in resilience, capitalizing upon the opportunity to respond and adapt to newly understood risks.” In CB1’s January 15, 2015 testimony, we stated, “It is especially important to study how partially implemented resiliency measures, such as phase 1 of the BIG U proposal, would redirect water to surrounding areas.” A partially funded Big U could create additional risks for our area.

Despite the urgent need for short and medium range resiliency measures to protect Lower Manhattan, there has been insufficient funding to meet these needs. Of the City’s entire CDBG-DR \$4.21 billion grant award, only roughly \$10 million total has been allocated in Community District 1, specifically to small business and Build it Back programs, not on resiliency infrastructure, although Superstorm Sandy caused billions of dollars worth of damage, causing major disruptions and permanently displacing some businesses. CB1 is not aware of any other allocation from the City of CDBG-DR funding from HUD to be allocated in our district.

The City’s CDBG-DR Action Plan provides \$3 million to be used to advance resiliency planning and feasibility studies for other areas of Southern Manhattan from Montgomery Street to the Battery Maritime Building. Roughly half of that area along the East River is south of the Brooklyn Bridge which is located in Community District 1. This equals roughly \$1.5 million – and does not include the tip of Lower Manhattan nor any portion along the Hudson River.

CB1 has played an active and positive role in the public process of Sandy recovery with both State and the City since October 29, 2012. We continue to be concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frame because Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected approaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Superstorm Sandy and faces an increasing potential for suffering extreme weather events as confirmed by experts in the field, as well as the subsequent financial damage to Lower Manhattan and the City at large.

CB1 was pleased by the recent announcement of additional resiliency investments in Lower Manhattan, including City and State investments of \$6.75 million to plan comprehensive flood protection in Lower Manhattan -- and the City’s first capital commitment of \$8 million for Battery Park flood protection design and first phase implementation. These are necessary, but by no means sufficient investments. Much more must be done.

We would like to thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for instituting the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program, community-based initiative, which has proved to be a successful, and through which \$3.75 million in State funds has been committed by the NY Rising Planning Committee for Lower Manhattan resiliency. In addition, the State funded infrastructure repairs and hardening to key transportation infrastructure downtown.

We are encouraged that the City and State have acknowledged the ongoing resiliency needs of Lower Manhattan through the dedication of these funds and look forward to speedy study and implementation as well as additional funding allocations in the future.

In addition, we are encouraged that for the purposes of the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Phase 1 application, HUD has identified that the State of New York, and specifically the Borough of Manhattan, as an eligible applicant. We urge that you make resiliency for our community a top priority for both the framing and implementation phases.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

COMMUNITY BOARD #1 – MANHATTAN  
**DRAFT RESOLUTION**

DATE: MARCH 24, 2015

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: PLANNING

COMMITTEE VOTE:        10 In Favor    0 Opposed    0 Abstained    0 Recused

RE:                    New York City Phase 1 Application for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development National Disaster Resilience Competition

WHEREAS:    At a height of seven feet, Lower Manhattan experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan and unfortunately two people in Community District 1 drowned. While great strides have been made in Lower Manhattan in terms of recovery and relief, there is still much that must be done to rebuild and revitalize what was destroyed, and to protect the area in anticipation of future extreme weather events; and

WHEREAS:    Nearing the 3 year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, CB1 remains concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frame because Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected and faces an increasing potential for extreme weather events as confirmed by experts in the field, and the subsequent financial damage to Lower Manhattan and the City at large; and

WHEREAS:    Although it is 2 ½ years after Superstorm Sandy, the City has not yet allocated any funding for coastal resiliency protection systems in the CB1 area, although the City’s Proposed Action Plan accounts for \$355 million in new coastal resiliency funding via the HUD Rebuild by Design program, including: \$335 million for a massive flood protection system of the East Side of Manhattan. The project will create a multi-layered protective system that will also provide social and environmental benefits to the community; and

WHEREAS:    CB1 has long advocated for funding and implementation for resiliency measures in Lower Manhattan. Our prioritized budget requests for Fiscal Year 2016 included that “EDC provide funds for the design and construction of short to medium term resiliency infrastructure in anticipation of future extreme weather events” (#2) as well as “EDC provide funds for the design and construction of long term resiliency infrastructure, such as the ‘Compartment C’ phase of the BIG U project, in anticipation of future extreme weather events” (#10); and

WHEREAS:    Lower Manhattan is in desperate need of immediate resiliency and hardening measures. Existing plans for such measures, such as the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee, are long-term projects that will not effectively protect Lower Manhattan for several decades. Resiliency plans for Lower Manhattan were included in the Rebuild by Design BIG U proposal, but \$335 million in funding

awarded in June 2014 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are only for the first phase of the project. This phase spans the coast of Manhattan from East 23rd Street to Montgomery Street, all north of the Brooklyn Bridge, and does not include any protection for the Community Board 1 area. The BIG U proposal contains plans for resiliency infrastructure in “Compartment 3”, from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery in Community District 1. This proposal includes “Berms in the Battery” at the southern tip of Manhattan, “strategically located so as to protect the ducts of the infrastructure below and create a continuous protective upland landscape” as well as flood protection in the Financial District which would help protect against massive potential damages, including critical infrastructure underneath (BIG U proposal). On June 24, 2014, Community Board 1 unanimously passed a resolution urging, “HUD to allocate dedicated funding for both study and implementation of the ‘Compartment 3’ portion of the BIG U proposal, which would contribute to the overall hardening of Lower Manhattan and assist in bridging the gap between short-term measures such as rapidly deployable flood barriers, and long-term strategies like the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee;” and

WHEREAS: On June 11, 2013, the City released “[A Stronger, More Resilient New York](#)” (SIRR), a comprehensive plan that contains actionable recommendations both for rebuilding the communities impacted by Sandy and increasing the resilience of infrastructure and buildings citywide; and

WHEREAS: The Initiative Summary includes Coastal Protection measure is to “(A) Install an integrated flood protection system in Lower Manhattan” and “(1) Create an implementation plan and design for an integrated flood protection system for remaining South Manhattan areas” (pp. 381-382); and

WHEREAS: In February 2015, Mayor de Blasio announced the release of the New York City Panel on Climate Change’s 2015 report, [Building the Knowledge Base for Climate Resiliency](#), providing climate projections through 2100 for the first time showing that sea level rise in New York City show an increase between 11 and 21 inches by the 2050s, between 18 and 39 inches by the 2080s, and between 22 and 50 inches by 2100, with a worst case projection of up to six feet by 2100; and

WHEREAS: CB1 was disappointed to learn that out of the \$4.21 billion grant award of the City’s total allocation of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds, only roughly \$1.5 million was awarded to the CB1 area towards resiliency measures for a feasibility study on the East side from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery Maritime Building. This is only a small portion of the CB1 area, and nothing has been awarded for implementation; and

WHEREAS: Of the original \$16 billion Federal appropriation, there is approximately \$1 billion in CDBG-DR funds remaining. The remaining CDBG-DR funds will be distributed via the National Disaster Resilience Competition. The funds in this competition are distinct from the \$4.21 billion allocated to New York City; and

WHEREAS: New York City is participating in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition. NDRC is a two-phase process that will competitively award nearly \$1 billion in HUD CDBG-Disaster Recovery funds to 67 eligible communities nationwide; and

WHEREAS: In this first phase, the City describes its unmet resiliency needs stemming from Hurricane Sandy. No specific projects will be identified in the Phase 1 application. If HUD accepts the City's first phase application and allows it to move to the second application phase, the City will identify specific projects for which it seeks funds after robust stakeholder engagement; and

WHEREAS: The [New York City application](#) for phase 1 of the NDRC focuses on city-wide housing issues, citing that "The City is qualifying its eligibility for NDRC with these Unmet Recovery Needs:

- The City's Build it Back Multi-Family Housing Program to benefit high-need buildings that were damaged during Hurricane Sandy and require resiliency upgrades to protect the majority of low- and moderate-income residents;
- Resiliency needs for multi-family housing at the New York City Housing Authority which was impacted by Sandy and requires the construction of improved storm-water management systems and back-up power generator systems on developments.

Should the City advance to Phase 2 of NDRC, it will be able to replicate and expand upon the innovative resiliency projects already underway such as those funded by HUD through Rebuild by Design."; and

WHEREAS: Furthermore, the application states that "All proposed projects will be in line with the City's goals: to create more resilient and protective coastlines; to upgrade aging infrastructure to be more resilient to extreme weather events; to stabilize neighborhoods by protecting housing for low- and moderate-income residents; and to protect local businesses that were negatively impacted by Hurricane Sandy. The goal is to ensure a more inclusive, fair, and resilient City for the future"; and

WHEREAS: A public hearing on the City's phase 1 application for the NDRC will be held on March 10, 2015; now

THEREFORE  
IT BE  
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 is disappointed that the significant unmet need in Lower Manhattan is not mentioned in the entire 60-page application; and

BE IT  
FURTHER  
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 strongly urges that the City acknowledge the specific ongoing needs of Lower Manhattan into its Phase 1 application for the NDRC with the goal of using potential awarded funds to assist in bridging the gap of funding not yet dedicated by other funding sources.