



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City Council  
Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget Hearing  
Recovery & Resiliency  
Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson  
Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY  
Tuesday, May 24 at 2:30PM**

Thank you Chairperson Ferreras and members of the Finance and Recovery and Resiliency Committees for holding this important public hearing today and inviting our testimony. My name is Catherine McVay Hughes and I am Chairperson at Community Board 1 which includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis, Governors and Liberty Islands.

At a height of seven feet, Community Board 1 (CB1) experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan during Superstorm Sandy. Two people in our district drowned and we suffered extreme damage to residential and commercial property, tunnels, public transit, telecommunications and our electrical grid.

CB1 has played an active and positive role in the public process of recovery, resiliency and sustainability for over three years since Superstorm Sandy. Lower Manhattan is in immediate need of resiliency and hardening measures. It has been almost four years since Sandy and we are concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frame. Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected while we face an increasing potential for suffering extreme weather events and subsequent damage.

“[National Aeronautics and Space Administration] NASA dropped a bombshell of a climate report. February 2016 has soared past all rivals as the warmest seasonally adjusted month in more than a century of global recordkeeping. NASA’s analysis showed that February ran 1.35°C (2.43°F) above the 1951-1980 global average for the month, as can be seen in the list of monthly anomalies going back to 1880. The previous record was set just last month, January 2016.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the New York Times has reported that Antarctic Ice is melting more rapidly than previously thought due to continued high emissions of heat-trapping gases, and that the total rise of the sea could reach five or six feet by 2100, with the rise of the sea exceeding a pace of a foot per decade by the middle of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> This information has grave implications for New York City and for Lower Manhattan specifically, which is surrounded by water on three sides.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wunderground.com/blog/JeffMasters/february-smashes-earths-alltime-global-heat-record-by-a-jawdropping>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/science/global-warming-antarctica-ice-sheet-sea-level-rise.html>

The City announced in 2015 that it will commit \$100 million for resiliency projects in Lower Manhattan to leverage its U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) application. In January 2016, HUD announced that New York City will be awarded \$176 million from the NDRC. Since then, the City has told CB1 that HUD dictated the full \$176 million must be used north of the Brooklyn Bridge for resiliency projects in the Two Bridges neighborhood. We commend the City for accepting CB1's request and announcing in April 2016 that the \$100 million in City funding for resiliency be dedicated for the Manhattan Tip project. The \$100 million in dedicated City funds helps to reach the City's estimate of \$234 million needed to finance the "Manhattan Tip" hardening project, but there is a \$134 million budget shortfall.

At the May 2016 Seaport/Civic Center Committee meeting, an Office of Recovery and Resiliency (ORR) representative was unable to clarify whether this was the amount needed to secure our District's waterfront edges for sea level rise for 2050 or 2100, which is a critical distinction. The ORR representative also said that the "Seaport City" concept is no longer being pursued, but we would like additional confirmation.

The [Register of Community Board Budget Requests for the Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2017 Manhattan 1](#) does not allocate any funding to either of CB1's Capital Budget Priorities and Requests for resiliency infrastructure.

According to the City's NDRC application, the project that will be funded by the NDRC award has a benefit-cost ratio of 2.34 while the unfunded project sited in Community District 1 (CD1), Coastal Protection for Manhattan Tip, has a benefit-cost ration of 19.33. The Manhattan Tip project has the highest benefit-cost ratio of all the projects proposed in the NDRC application, but it is still not fully funded.

The City announced in a Crain's article (02/13/16) that the construction and engineering company AECOM, along with design firm Dewberry were selected to design a sprawling series of resiliency measures aimed at protecting Lower Manhattan from future flooding and rising sea levels. CB1 has worked in good faith with the City since Sandy in 2012. However, the community engagement planning process, expected to take two years, has not even begun and there is a huge funding gap for implementation.

Since the funding for CB1 has been inadequate and fragmented from the rest of the City's resiliency funding and planning, CB1 requests that when the City finally does begin its community engagement process that a Resiliency Task Force for "Manhattan Tip" be formed that is geographically exclusive to CD1 in order to reflect our specific needs and challenges, and that these community engagement meetings take place within CB1's boundary, so that they are easily accessible to CD1 residents.

Finally, we are quite concerned about the long-term plan for the multi-purpose levee along Lower Manhattan's eastern edge, which would incorporate high density development to an area that already lacks critical infrastructure such as public school seats for a growing child population, and a deteriorated public transportation system. Renderings for this multi-purpose

levee were included in OneNYC, but not in the City's NDRC Phase 2 application. We request updated information on how the multi-purpose levee fits into the City's long-term sustainability plans.

We urge the Council to ensure that the Manhattan Tip project is adequately funded in a timely manner so as to protect this important residential, commercial and tourism hub from future extreme weather events. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.