



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

New York City Council

**Committee on Recovery and Resiliency jointly with the Committee on Environmental Protection Oversight: OneNYC – Review of the City’s Resiliency and Sustainability Plans
Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY
Monday, December 14, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.**

Thank you Chairman Treyger, Chairman Constantinides and members of the Committee on Recovery and Resiliency jointly with the Committee on Environmental Protection for holding this important public hearing today and inviting our testimony. My name is Catherine McVay Hughes and I am Chair of 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.

Community Board 1 (CB1) is surrounded by water on three sides. At a height of seven feet, CB1 experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan during Superstorm Sandy. Two people in our district died 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 three 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.

Lower Manhattan is an increasingly mixed-use neighborhood with a rapidly growing residential population and is also a critical economic driver for all of New York. According to a report published by the Downtown Alliance in November 2015, while Lower Manhattan encompasses only 0.3% – that is three one-thousandths – of New York City’s land area, it contributed \$2.4B to NYS and another \$2.4B to NYC tax revenue and provided 9.2% of NYC’s GDP in FY 2014. Further, 70% of all Lower Manhattan workers live in the five boroughs of New York City. As a critical economic hub for both the City and the State, Lower Manhattan must be protected from future extreme weather events.

CB1 is encouraged that progress is being made and thanks the City and State for a combined roughly \$15 million in resiliency funding for CB1 which was announced in March 2015, as well as the recent commitment from the City to contribute \$100 million to leverage potential funding from the “Manhattan Tip” portion, now including Battery Park City and Tribeca, of the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Phase 2. We look forward to hearing who the City will choose from their recently released Request for Proposal (RFP) for an

engineering and planning study, to be award January 2016, so that the roughly two-year-long engineering study can begin.

In May 2014, CB1 adopted a resolution supporting the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG) developed by the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. We believe that the WEDG guidelines should be used in any waterfront hardening or development.

We request continuing communication and information on ongoing resiliency initiatives for CB1, including specific funding and timeline information. CB1 requests more information on projects marked “completed” from the OneNYC document, which notes the progress of SIRR initiatives as of April 2015, including how those initiatives contribute to recovery and resiliency in Lower Manhattan, as well as more information on the City’s Ten-Year Capital Strategy, including the timeline and resiliency plans for CB1.

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 (see attached). We request updated information on how the multi-purpose levee fits into the City’s long-term sustainability plans.

CB1 has long supported not only resiliency, but sustainability efforts as well. In October 2014, we adopted a resolution and testified in support of Int. 378 and the initiative to reduce greenhouse gases by 80% by 2050. In December 2014, we adopted a resolution in support of Passive House and a zero net energy standard. CB1 has also adopted several resolutions and testified regarding the transition from dirty heating oil and light pollution.

Finally, CB1 is encouraged by and supports NYC Council Resolution 0909, calling on the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support NYC's application for National Disaster Resilience Competition funding. In September 2015, CB1 unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the City’s NDRC application and the Manhattan Tip component specifically, as well as issuing a letter of support to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in support of the application in October 2015 (attached).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Seaport City



In addition, the City will continue to evaluate long-term coastal protection measures, such as a multipurpose levee in Lower Manhattan, particularly where investments could strengthen communities and potentially generate funding to offset construction costs. Finally, the City will continue to explore other innovative financing opportunities.

A proposed multipurpose levee in Lower Manhattan

OneNYC (April 2015): Potential development for Seaport City

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/onenyc/downloads/pdf/publications/OneNYC.pdf> (Page 250)



NYC NDRC Phase 2 Application (October 2015)

http://www.nyc.gov/html/cdbg/downloads/pdf/NDRCApplication_Exhibits_10%202015_3.pdf (Page 88)



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October 26, 2015

Secretary Julián Castro
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

RE: Letter of Support for New York City's Application to the National Disaster Resilience Competition

Dear Secretary Castro:

I am writing to express my unqualified support for New York City's application to the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). The Lower Manhattan Protect and Connect proposal demonstrates a clear and compelling resilience vision for New York City that builds upon the successful *Rebuild by Design* process and best represents the concepts that the NDRC is seeking to encourage among its eligible grantees. This application deserves to be funded in full and I urge HUD to award \$500 million to New York City from this last remaining allocation of Sandy recovery funds.

Manhattan Community District 1 includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis Island, Governors Island and Liberty Island. At a height of seven feet, our district experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan during Superstorm Sandy, resulting in the drowning of two people in our district as well as extreme property and financial damage.

Lower Manhattan is one of the country's largest central business districts, with over 300,000 jobs that generate billions of dollars in economic activity year after year. It is also home to significant regional transportation and infrastructure assets. And it continues to attract residents and cultural institutions that contribute to its unique character.

However, Lower Manhattan continues to be vulnerable to coastal flooding and rising sea levels, as we saw quite vividly during Hurricane Sandy. With climate change, we know these risks will only grow. The comprehensive resilience program proposed in the City's application, consisting of integrated coastal protection and stormwater management, improved urban design and placemaking, and retrofits for multifamily buildings, together comprise an integrated approach to urban flooding while strengthening the community and promoting affordable housing, consistent with the City's OneNYC strategic plan.

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With a total capital commitment of \$108 million in City funds to this project, Mayor de Blasio has made a substantial commitment to Lower Manhattan and its long-term resilience. I strongly encourage HUD to become a partner in this project and help New York City to achieve its NDRC vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine McVay Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine McVay Hughes
Chairperson