



The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 1

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New York City Council
Committee on Environmental Protection
Oversight - The Mission, Work and Accomplishments of The Mayor's Office of
Sustainability and The Office of Recovery and Resiliency
Testimony by Diana Switaj, Director of Planning & Land Use
250 Broadway, Committee Rm, 16th Fl
Thursday, April 12, 2018, 1:00PM

Good Afternoon. My name is Diana Switaj, Director of Planning and Land Use at Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1) whose district includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis, Governors and Liberty Islands. Thank you for holding this important hearing today and inviting testimony on sustainability and resiliency.

CB 1 commends the many years of leadership from the City Council in tackling greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings, the largest source of the city's carbon emissions. Intro 1745 of 2017 is a bold and innovative step towards cutting carbon emissions and reaffirmed New York City's leadership on tackling climate change. We look forward to the Council reintroducing and passing this bill, a critical step in the holistic approach to addressing sustainability and resiliency.

Lower Manhattan continues to be one of America's largest business districts and our residential population is one of the fastest growing in the whole city. Our district is only 1.5 square miles but it has a huge impact on the city and regional economies. In 2013 Lower Manhattan had a gross economic output of over \$62 billion dollars and generated an estimated \$2.4 billion dollars in city tax revenues (Downtown Alliance). Our district remains a resilient place that more and more people want to live, work and visit. We have a lot of work to do to assure that these powerful growth trends result in a district that is protected and livable for all.

At a height of seven feet, Community District 1 experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan during Superstorm Sandy in October 2012. Two people in our district drowned and the storm resulted in billions of dollars of damage to infrastructure, housing and commercial property and utilities. As we approach the sixth anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, the board is concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frames as Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected. We face an increasing potential for suffering extreme weather events and subsequent damage to Lower Manhattan, and low-lying areas across the City.

CB1 has worked collaboratively with City, State and Federal representatives since October 2012, when Sandy devastated our community. We thank the City for the funds it has already contributed towards resiliency in Lower Manhattan. The Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency (LMCR) project is underway, but there is a substantial funding shortfall. CB1 maintains that it is critical to fully finance the LMCR project and ensure that our district is protected in the future. It is unclear from where the required funding will come, and we urge the City to find ways of securing additional funding sources for the construction of a more resilient Lower Manhattan.

As the LMCR project goes on through initial analysis and preliminary design stages, more is uncovered that adds challenge to an already monumental task. Not only is Lower Manhattan surrounded by water on three sides, but all of the edges have been built out on landfill presenting unique vulnerability and challenges. The Office of Recovery and Resiliency (ORR) team is uncovering more complexity in protecting Lower Manhattan that was ever imagined and this will lead to greater challenges, cost and commitment.

CB1 also commends the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and the Mayor's Office of Recovery & Resiliency on the work they have done thus far to analyze the problem and begin to formulate a plan; both for the long-term and more recently for intermediate measures. This is a herculean task that has never before been attempted. However, every year since Sandy that the City doesn't endure a hurricane feels like a narrow miss and eventually our luck will run out. We must all work together to ensure that creative and effective sustainability and resiliency measures are put in place to protect Lower Manhattan, and the entire City, now and in perpetuity.