



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

166A 22nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232
347-841-4410
Nyceja@gmail.com
www.NYC-EJA.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 23, 2013

Sandy Regional Assembly Releases Analysis of Mayor Bloomberg's Sandy Rebuilding Report – Calls on Federal Sandy Task Force to Include Community Priorities in Presidential Report

New York – In response to Mayor Bloomberg's sweeping Sandy Rebuilding report, a regional coalition of community and civic organizations released their analysis of the report, and called on the federal Sandy Rebuilding Task Force to address priority gaps for the City's most vulnerable communities. The Task Force, led by HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, is expected to issue their Sandy Rebuilding recommendations to President Obama in a report scheduled for August 2nd.

The **Sandy Regional Assembly** – convened by nearly 200 participants from community, labor and civic groups from communities most impacted by Superstorm Sandy (and most vulnerable to future storm surges) - issued a *Sandy Regional Recovery Agenda* in April, a mix of suggested capital projects and policy recommendations to advance adaptation and community resiliency strategies for the region's most vulnerable communities. The *Sandy Regional Recovery Agenda* was shared with Mayor Bloomberg's Sandy Rebuilding team - called the **Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (or SIRR)** - as well as with HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, other members of the federal Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, the federal Joint Field Office established under the National Disaster Recovery Framework and headed by FEMA, and Governor Cuomo's office. (To read the Sandy Regional Agenda, visit http://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/4969505/NYC-EJA/SandyRegionalAssemblyRecoveryAgenda_WEB_033013.pdf)

The Sandy Regional Assembly analyzed Mayor Bloomberg's *SIRR* report to see whether it addressed vulnerable community priorities from the *Sandy Regional Recovery Agenda*. Among the conclusions were:

SIRR Report – Positive Achievements:

. The SIRR report builds on the framework created by PlaNYC2030, securing an important level of inter-agency coordination.

. The SIRR report supports targeted interventions to mitigate the risks of coastal storm surges and discards proposals for large-scale harbor-wide storm surge barriers. A

combination of different strategies acknowledges that there is no one single solution to protect NYC against future coastal storms. SIRR's combination of hard engineering projects with green infrastructure interventions will increase open space recreation amenities, and can provide diverse employment opportunities.

. The City will finish the NYC Department of City Planning's Open Industrial Uses Study and the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability will develop a catalogue of "best practices" for storing enclosed hazardous substances in flood-prone industrial areas. In addition, the SIRR introduces strategies to accelerate brownfield clean-up, and the exploration of strengthened cleanup standards for industrial waterfront brownfields vulnerable to the re-suspension of contaminants.

. The SIRR recommends repair and retrofitting of public housing units damaged by Sandy to increase resiliency. NYCHA will also undertake a planning process to identify additional resiliency investments in developments that are vulnerable to weather-related events, even if they were unaffected by Sandy.

SIRR Report – What Is Missing:

. The SIRR fails to propose a “local resiliency jobs strategy” for proposed NYCHA adaptation/resiliency improvements and investments. The SIRR should have leveraged the job creation opportunities posed by their NYCHA capital project proposals and invoked NYCHA's HUD Section 3 responsibility to ensure local resident hiring.

. The vulnerability of the Tri-State Region's Hunts Point Food Distribution Center to potential hazardous exposures from industrial facilities/sites in the South Bronx has not been addressed.

. The SIRR fails to address potential hazardous exposures in industrial waterfront communities such as the Significant Maritime and Industrial Areas that can result from a range of climate change impacts beyond flooding (such as storm surges, strong winds, sea-level-rise, etc.). Moreover, the SIRR should have addressed the manufacturing, handling and transfer of hazardous substances - not just their storage.

. The SIRR's analysis of community capacity should not have been limited to “outreach” activities. Instead, it should have included community-based planning and research capacity, community efforts to act as first-responders and community-led recovery work.

Federal Sandy Task Force recommendations to address SIRR gaps:

. Identify technical/financial resources to allow grassroots engagement, including technical assistance grants for community organizations with advocacy track records

. Lengthen public comment periods to longer than the current fourteen days and incorporate public engagement opportunities during the development of proposals

. Create a WPA-style public works/jobs program for NYCHA residents by enforcing HUD's Section 3 mandates of employing local businesses and workers for recovery

. Support/fund existing (and future) community-based planning initiatives and associated capital projects that already expand adaptation and resiliency strategies/interventions, in addition to the SIRR proposals. Examples of planning initiatives include the Sunset Park Greenway-Blueway, South Bronx Greenway, Bronx River Greenway, among others.

. Fund community-based organization proposals for Climate Adaptation/Community Resiliency/Disaster Relief Centers to engage/train the community, distribute emergency preparedness guidelines and supplies, and conduct research/share information on potential climate change threats, efforts to reduce community vulnerability. Centers can also serve as repositories of information to track populations with special needs

. Eliminate displacement by certifying that any project or program initiated as part of the recovery process will not lead to a reduction of the supply of housing affordable to low and moderate-income residents in any neighborhood.

. Conduct a Community Health Investigation to determine health impacts of post-Sandy contamination, including an analysis of the impacts on community first responders and recovery workers that reflects the long-term health impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder, and cumulative impacts to workers and residents of coastal industrial neighborhoods with potential exposures to hazardous substances and toxic chemicals.

“Our analysis shows how the Mayor’s SIRR Report reflects the priorities of the Sandy Regional Assembly, what it misses – and how the federal government can help our most vulnerable communities,” said Eddie Bautista of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance. “While the SIRR Report is a long way from fully addressing the priorities expressed by the Sandy Regional Assembly, it is a significant effort that represents certain key opportunities to advance our agenda in its implementation,” said Elena Conte of the Pratt Center. “Although the SIRR Report is a step in the right direction, it overlooked multiple opportunities to increase the resiliency of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. NYCHA capital investments must be accompanied by aggressive investments in our human resources, with real commitments to hiring NYCHA residents for any public housing improvements,” said Pat Simon, Executive Director of the Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation. “As the federal Sandy Task Force wraps up its report to President Obama, its critical that the Task Force remedy the missing gaps from the SIRR Report by working with community based organizations which have always strived to increase the resiliency of their neighborhoods,” said David Shuffler, Executive Director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice.

To read the Sandy Regional Assembly SIRR Analysis and Call on the Federal Sandy Task Force, please visit: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/4969505/NYC-EJA/SRA/SandyRegionalAssembly_SIRRAnalysis_072313.pdf

Contact:

Eddie Bautista

Executive Director, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

347-841-4410

eddie@nyc-eja.org

###