

Support for Intro 1620 (as of October 21, 2019)**Brooklyn Greenway Initiative****Emergency Shelter Network****Human Services Council****National Parks Conservation Association****Natural Areas Conservancy****New York Building Congress****New York Disaster Interfaith Services****New York League of Conservation Voters****New York VOAD****Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation****Riverkeeper****Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay****Staten Island Inter-Religious Leadership****SWIM Coalition****Tenants United Fighting For Lower East Side (TUFF LES)****Waterfront Alliance****MEMO OF SUPPORT – INTRO 1620****Creation of a comprehensive five borough plan to protect the entire shoreline from climate change, sea level rise and sunny day flooding**

Our coasts are under threat from climate change, and we're already paying for it. Seven years after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, progress has been made, but our region is still vulnerable to the increasing risks brought by climate change and sea level rise. Sandy alone led to \$60 billion in damages; our national flood insurance program is more than \$20 billion in debt. And, we're paying the cost in blackouts, train and road closures, flood damage and repairs, rising insurance premiums, and changes to ways of life.

In 2019, the Waterfront Alliance has convened a regional Resilience Task Force comprised of more than 300 stakeholders from the public and private sectors, ranging from grassroots community groups to engineers and finance sector to government agencies, charged with building consensus and informing a campaign to adapt New York and New Jersey to sea level rise and coastal storms. This letter includes some members of this task force and is informed by conversations held within its context.

We encourage Council Members to sign onto Intro 1620, which calls for the creation of a comprehensive five borough plan to strengthen the resilience of the entire shoreline from climate change, sea level rise and sunny day flooding.

The New York City Panel on Climate Change's (NPCC) 2019 report offers a sobering new lens known as the Rapid Ice Melt scenario: the metropolitan region could experience 9.5 feet of sea level rise by the end of the century.

As we face climate change and increasing flood risk, we are simultaneously amidst an affordable housing crisis and increased demand for space. Much of our infrastructure is under stress and underfunded. Significant portions of Coney Island, Rockaway, Red Hook, Howard Beach, East Harlem, East Inwood, Hunts Point, Port Morris, and Throgs Neck, many of which are primarily low-moderate income communities and communities of color, among others, are projected to be underwater daily before the end of the century and face disproportionate risk and social vulnerability. As we work to reduce greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change in partnership with and support of the State of New York's historic climate legislation, we must ensure that our coastal communities are wisely and resolutely prepared for the reality of sea level rise and the next big storm. A comprehensive lens has never been more important.

Building coastal resilience demands a variety of strategies: policy change; incentives and regulation; physical investments (green infrastructure, integrated flood protection, housing, managed relocation) and governance reforms.

A comprehensive plan for resiliency, like Intro 1620, can help us to have a fuller understanding of and conversation about the trade-offs involved in resiliency planning. We encourage the Council to consider a comprehensive, 5-borough approach that:

- Is informed by the New York City Panel on Climate Change and regularly updated following an adaptive management cycle or as new projections and plans are developed;
- Clarifies the agencies responsible for key functions of resiliency governance (communication, planning, implementation, maintenance);
- Is funded. We recognize that it will take resources to ensure a sound community-based process;
- Builds off existing community-based plans, the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency; Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans, and other relevant planning and design investigations, avoiding duplication. While some areas of New York City currently have adaptation or resiliency plans and have held extensive public processes, others are lacking;
- Is clear up-front about the limitations and possibilities for resiliency in all areas at flood risk;
- Establishes flood districts and targets for flood risk reduction and long-term planning (from stormwater to surge), based on logical hydrologic/topographic boundaries and including mechanisms for planning across jurisdictional (state and municipal) lines;
- Considers a more comprehensive approach to rezoning, based on the multiple challenges and opportunities facing the city;
- Better positions the City to prepare for and respond quickly to federal funding opportunities as they arise;
- Identifies opportunities to incorporate resiliency into “dig once” policies for maintenance and capital projects (e.g. road replacement, bulkhead repair, etc.);
- Prioritizes low-income communities and communities of color, and including green infrastructure in an equitable planning process and investment strategy.
- Develops clear, accessible, and equitable targets for risk reduction (e.g. number of people at risk of flooding, number of people with low adaptive capacity living in the floodplain, amount of public infrastructure addressed).

A comprehensive plan can empower New York City to pursue the investments needed to build greater resilience to climate and disaster risks, and to access the funding and financing necessary to ensure that those investments come to fruition.

The demands facing New York City’s waterfront communities today are not the same as they were 10 years ago or 20 years ago and we need to plan accordingly. Adapting to climate change is increasingly not just a choice about strategy. It is also about the fundamental changes to our coastal cities we are open to, and the future that we want. All options should be on the table, and the public needs to be a major part of this conversation.

Sincerely,

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