

Community Conversation: Limited-English Proficient Individuals - Resilient NJ

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: 5-11-21

SUBJECT: Community Conversation Summary: LEP
Resilient NJ - Atlantic County Coastal Communities (ACCR)

A meeting was held on May 11, 2021 at 5:00 PM with La Casa Dominicana to discuss the Resilient NJ Project. The meeting was held via Zoom. The following were in attendance:

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Part 1: Introductions and Welcome

- The facilitator welcomed participants and introduced project staff members who were present.
- The facilitator explained the agenda for the conversation and provided background about the Resilient NJ project.

Part 2: Past Disasters and Related Challenges

The facilitator guided participants in a conversation about their experiences with past disasters and how these disasters have impacted their communities. Participants introduced themselves and described the following challenges:

- Participant #1: Resident of Chelsea Heights, Atlantic City. She described the significant damage caused by 2 inches of rain and the resulting flood. She obtained funding from the Salvation Army to pay for home repairs after the flood. Although

she was able to repair the house, she was not able to raise the structure because she knew she would ultimately lose the house. Her house was a duplex; the owner of the adjacent duplex was able to raise their structure. During the repairs, she had to relocate for a period of eight months, with four months were spent in a hotel. Because of this experience, the need for adequate housing is very important to her and she has noticed more residents also fixing and raising their homes. She believes that it is important for people to make those repairs if they can afford it.

- Participant #2: Resident of Pleasantville. This participant had not personally experienced a natural disaster but knew of others who had. The only issue that he has experienced has been fallen trees after a storm.
- Participant #3: Resident of Hamilton Township in Mays Landing. This participant worked for Stockton University in Atlantic City for 9 years where he coordinated disaster recovery efforts during Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and others storms. During these major storms, his office assisted students who had lost their homes and belongings or had no way to travel to school. His office followed up with professors to inform them of student challenges, purchased new textbooks and other supplies for students, and extended student loan programs. During Hurricane Irene, his office participated in an effort called Big Blue where the university's sports center opened up as a temporary shelter for 800 to 900 persons. This effort faced several difficulties, including 2-3-hour delays and limited to no food available within the shelter due to lack of internal coordination. He stressed the need for food and medical assistance during emergency evacuations. During the evacuation, he was concerned about several buses that spent an excessive amount of time in transit before evacuees were able to rest or receive food.
- Participant #4: During the last hurricane she lived in Galloway, one block away from the beach. Fortunately, her family was prepared to evacuate, however her neighbors were not so fortunate. They ended up being trapped in the second floor of their home when the flood level rose to 4 feet. She observed that residents received inconsistent information and stressed the importance of a consistent evacuation plan so that residents are aware of evacuation, food assistance, and relocation procedures.
- Participant #5: Resident of Galloway. She was affected by power outages during the hurricane, but she generally felt prepared. Her Atlantic City friends were less fortunate. For example, the first floor of many of their homes were completely flooded.
 - She stressed the need for personal responsibility, including the need to keep all important documents and other essentials secure and easily accessible in case of an evacuation. She has personally witnessed the difficulty of losing such documents, particularly for the immigrant community. She noted that it is important for people to educate themselves about evacuation procedures.

- In her role as a mental health service provider, her agency was one of the companies responsible for providing assistance. From a mental health perspective, her agency noticed heightened levels of anxiety and compulsive hoarding after the loss of possessions. She has also noticed heightened anxiety during the pandemic. More mental health assistance is needed in the area.
- Participant #6: Resident of Galloway. This participant is a recent resident and has not experienced any natural disasters. However, she has heard stories from other residents. One person told the participant that she was not home during the time of Hurricane Sandy, and she came back to the area to find her home destroyed. This participant emphasized the importance of having essential documents and items easily accessible to be able to evacuate easily and efficiently.
- Participant # 7: This participant noted that many of the problems that the natural disasters caused were problems that were already present. The problems were only exacerbated by the disaster. Participants noted the following issues that are exacerbated by disasters:
 - Poverty and the need to help immigrants
 - People that are in better social/economic circumstances are less likely to suffer as a result of the natural disaster.
 - People do not pay enough attention to communication about disaster readiness and therefore have little defense capabilities during natural disasters.
 - There is a need for further research about why issues with evacuation and relocation continue to recur as a result of natural disasters. The consequences of a disaster in the area have happened in the past. Conduct research in similar places that have been more successful in withstanding disasters.
 - Some residents prefer to stay at home during storms because of a fear of having their personal belongings stolen during relocation.
 - Single parents not only have to relocate their households but also assist their children through the evacuation and relocation process. They might need special assistance.
- Participant #8: Resident of Atlantic City. She has experienced power outages and has felt anxiety about how best to handle the situation for herself and her children. She stressed the need for education to be prepared in the event of a natural disaster.

Part 3: Community Assets

Participants shared their ideas and thoughts about what community assets and important places are most important to protect from future disasters. The facilitators began this section of the conversation by reviewing different types of assets and examples of assets.

Assets mentioned by participants included:

- Transportation
- Public health
- Hospitals and medical services
- Schools
- Recreational services
- Accessibility to food and food assistance
- Consistent communication among community members
- Efficient internet connection for on-going communication
- Education
- Consistent community meetings
- Infrastructure
- Protection for youths and older adults
- Educational services
- Holding stakeholders accountable

Part 4: Vision for the Future

Participants considered what they want their community to be in five or ten years and described their visions for a safer, more resilient future. They shared the following visions:

- A community where everyone is employed
- An informed community
- A community where everyone has access to resources and information
- A well-prepared community
- There is no digital divide
- There is no prejudice and there is inclusivity for all
- A community that exhibits Christian values
- The vulnerable groups (such as the homeless) are taken care of



Conversaciones Comunitarias

Resilient NJ and La Casa Dominicana





Informe del Proyecto

El Departamento de Protección Medioambiental de Nueva Jersey está trabajando con socios locales para proteger a las comunidades de la región del Condado de Atlantic City de las catástrofes.

Esta región ha sufrido huracanes, nor'easters y, ahora, una pandemia. Estos acontecimientos tienen efectos duraderos en las comunidades. Estamos elaborando un plan para el futuro de modo que podamos prevenir los impactos y recuperarnos más rápidamente.

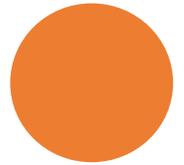
Temas a Discutir

entender:

- ¿Cómo han afectado las catástrofes a su comunidad?
- ¿Qué es importante para usted y en su comunidad que tenemos que proteger?
- ¿Cómo quiere que sea tu comunidad en el futuro?

Le ayudaremos:

- Proporcionando herramientas para ayudarle a usted y a su familia a planificar y protegerse.



Ejemplos de Activos



Servicios Gubernamentales

- Tribunales
- Cuerpo de Bomberos
- Ayuntamiento
- Edificios municipales
- Oficina de correos
- Departamentos de Policía
- Oficina de Gestión de Emergencias



Naturaleza

- Playas
- Ecosistemas
- Parques



Infraestructura

- Puentes
- Carreteras
- Paradas y rutas de autobús
- Alcantarillas, sistemas de drenaje
- Rutas de evacuación
- Centrales eléctricas
- Líneas telefónica (celulares) e Internet



Salud

- Hospitales
- Refugio de animales
- Centros de vida asistida
- Consultorios médicos y dentistas
- Centros de Recreación



Social y Cultural

- Bibliotecas
- Boardwalk o senderos a lo largo del mar
- Centros comunitarios,
- Escuelas
- Ferias, festivales
- Marinas
- Centros de oración (templos, iglesias)



Económico

- Bancos/Finanzas
- Distritos comerciales
- Estructuras comerciales
- Negocios individuales
- Estructura industrial



Vivienda

- Apartamentos
- Refugios
- Casas de familia, Townhouses o Dúplex
- Casas móviles