

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE

Damaris Reyes

Executive Director, Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)

Equitable Adaptation: Collaborating for Resilience

December 1, 2016 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm EST



Outline

- **The Lower East Side**
- **Hurricane / Super storm Sandy**
- **Community-Based Disaster Response**
- **Lessons learned & Best Practices**

The Lower East Side

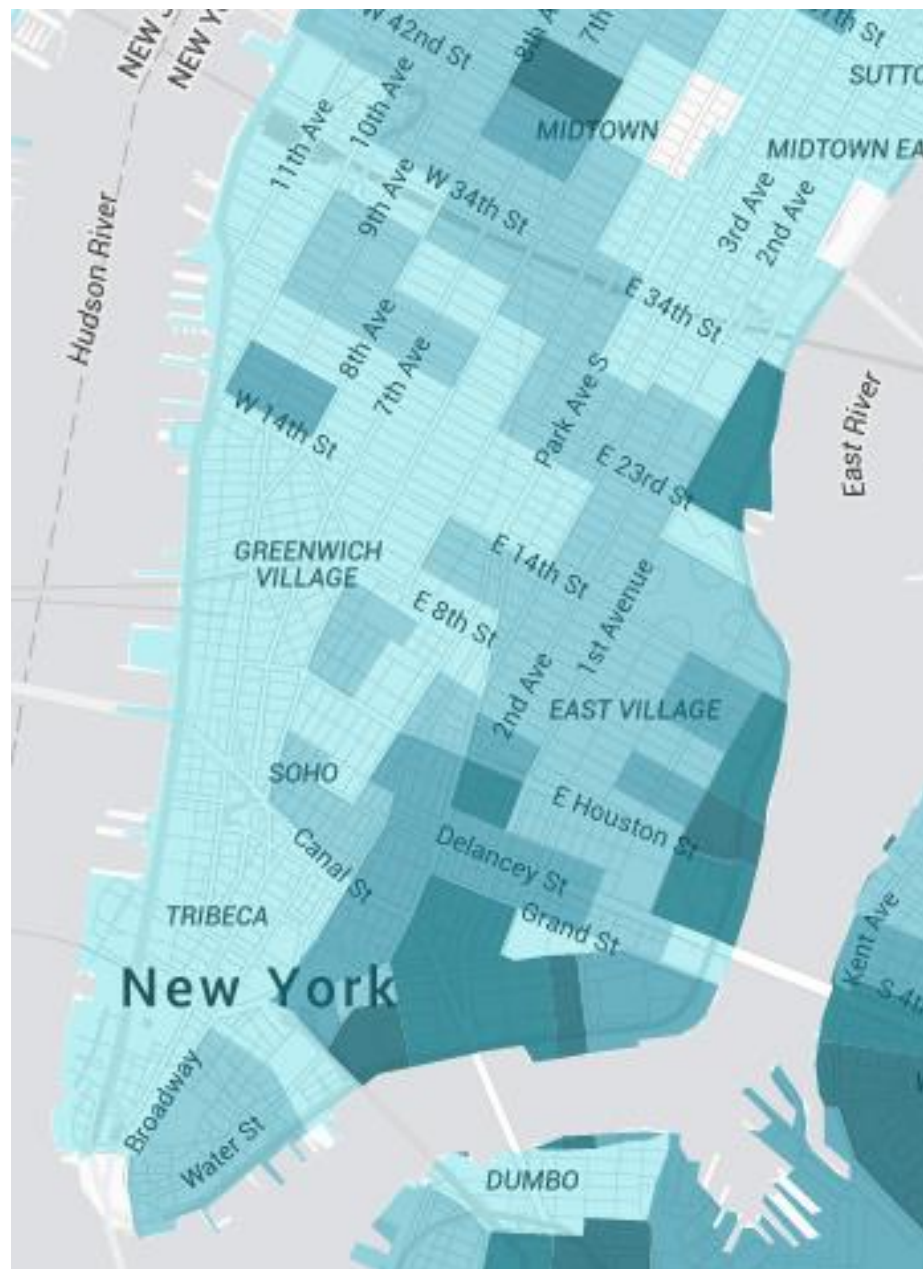


- Chinatown
- East Village
- Two Bridges
- Alphabet City









Pct. below the poverty line

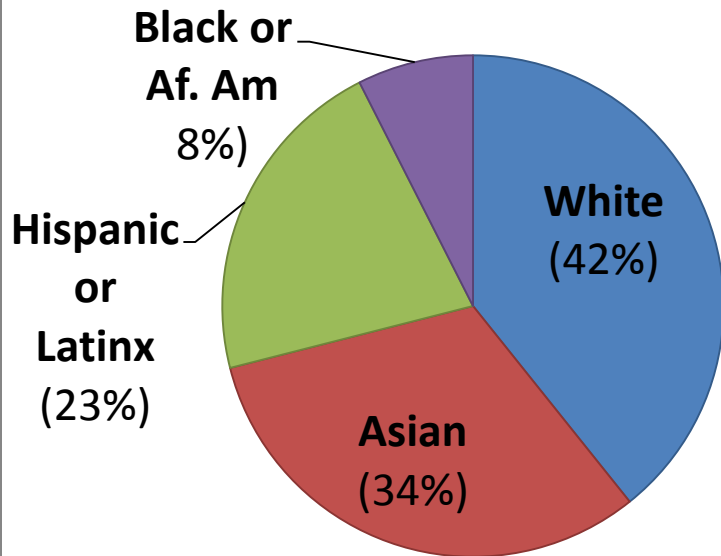


POVERTY THRESHOLDS IN 2012

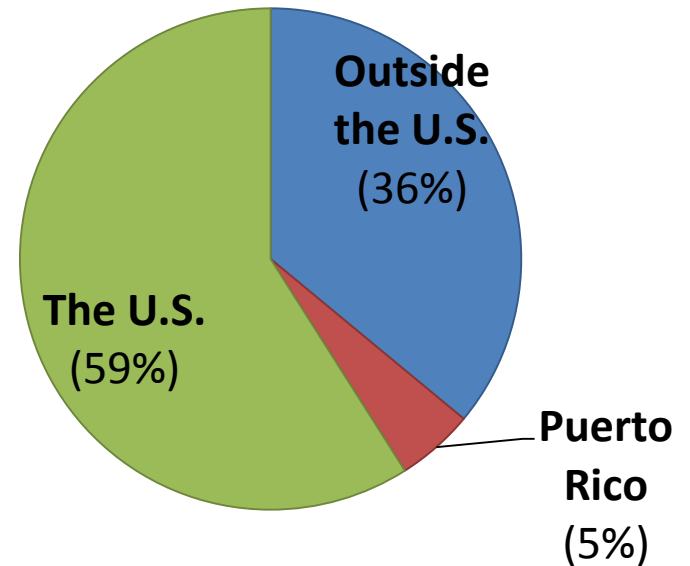
\$23,283 Family of four

\$11,945 Individual under 65

Race & Ethnicity



Place of Birth

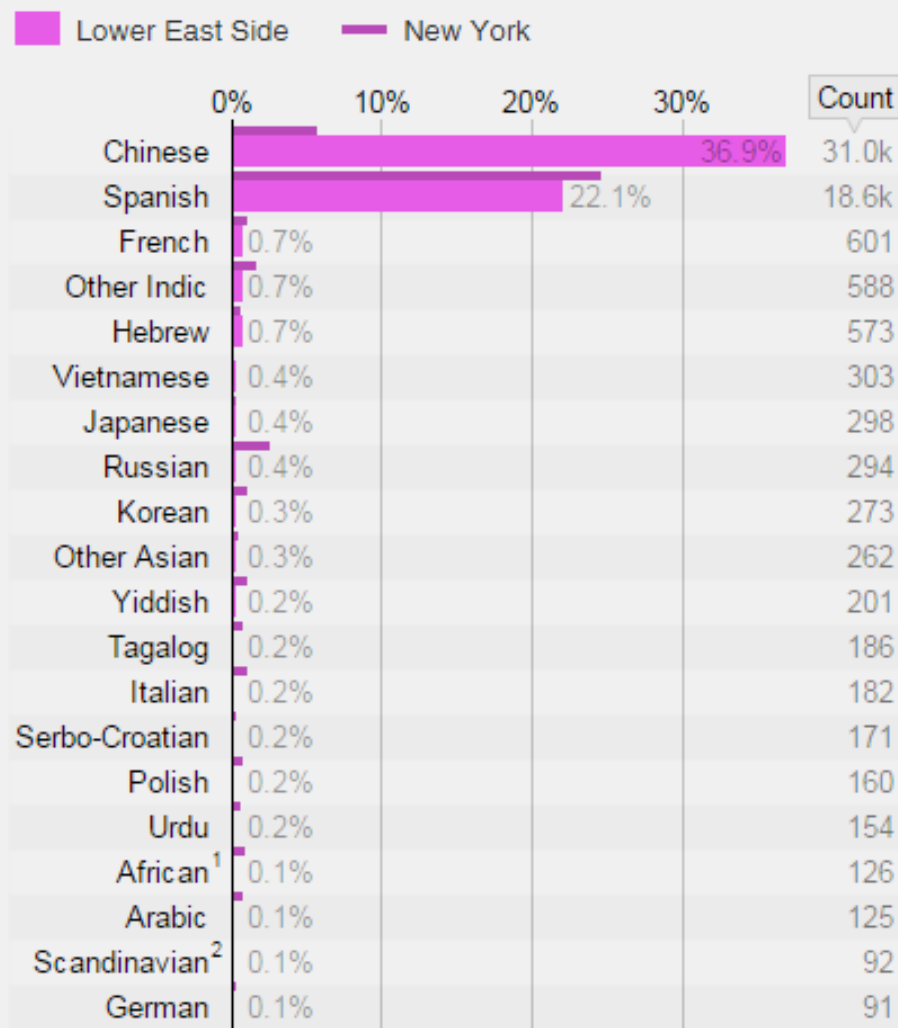


Language Spoken At Home

#1

Percentage of the total population living in households in which a given language is spoken at home.

Scope: population of New York and Lower East Side



Count number of people speaking given language at home

¹ Amharic, Ibo, Twi, Yoruba, Bantu, Swahili, Somali

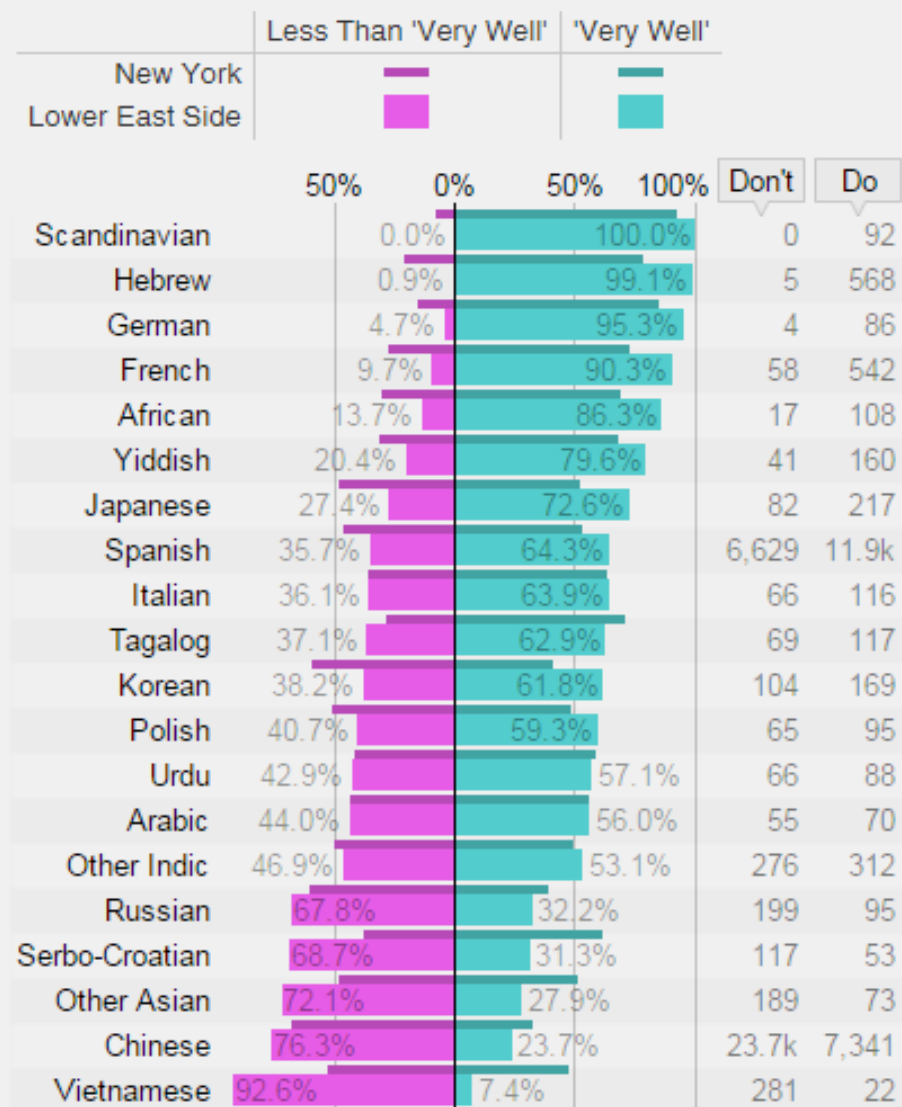
² Danish, Norwegian, Swedish

Speaking English 'Very Well'

#2

Percentage of people living in households in which a given language is spoken at home.

Scope: population of New York and Lower East Side



Don't number of people that don't speak English 'very well'

Do number of people that do speak English 'very well'



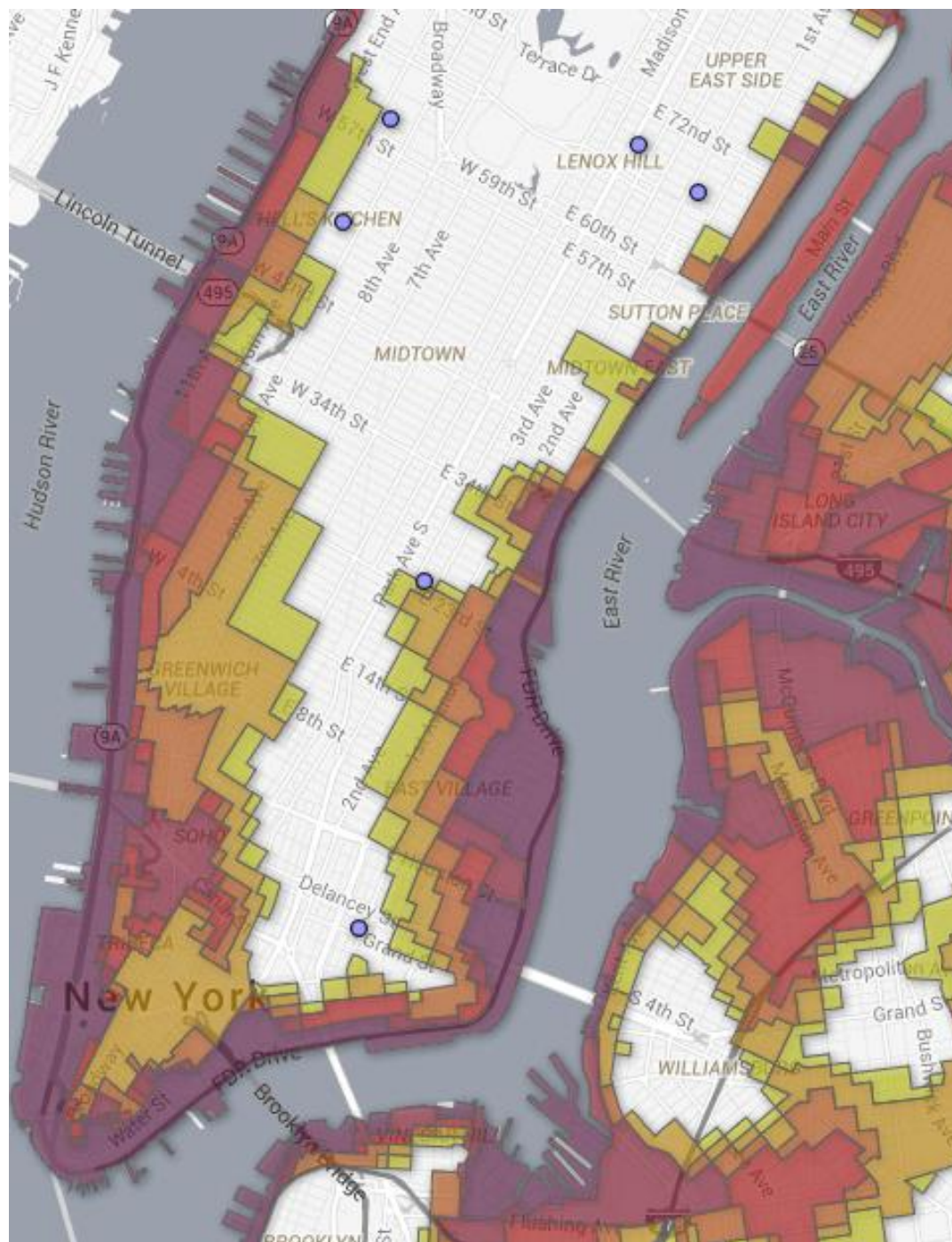
Tompkins Park



Williamsburg Bridge

East River Park
btw 13th st & Williamsburg Bridge





Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3

Zone 4

Zone 5

Zone 6

No Zone

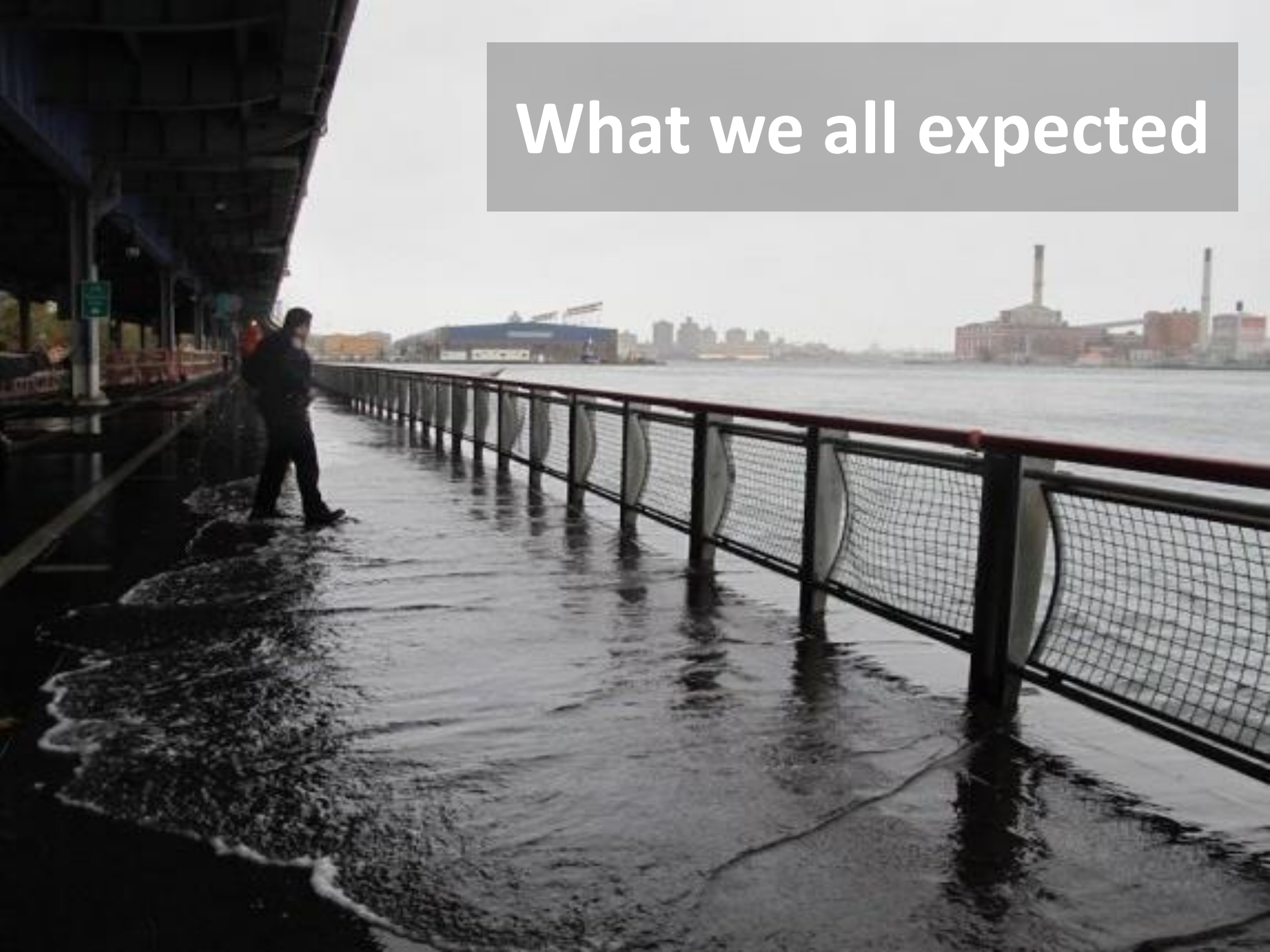
Residents who do not live in a hurricane evacuation zone face are unlikely to experience a storm surge flooding from a hurricane.

HURRICANE SANDY

- October 29th 2012
 - Wind speed: 80 mph
 - Wind field extension: 1,000 mi
 - Full Moon + High Tide



What we all expected



Impact in Manhattan



- Battery: Storm Surge 14'+
- Flooding beyond 100-yr floodplain boundaries (~Zone A)
- No power South of 39th St

17% (51 sq miles) of NYC flooded.

\$19 Billion damage

Damage to key infrastructures



***Immense need among
affected residents***

- 2 million without power
- 13th St pumping station out of service
- Manhattan<->Bk subways closed
- Roads damaged; No street/traffic lights
- No ATM
- No EBT
- No phone lines; Cell phone services disrupted
- Many businesses closed
- Gas scarce

On the Lower East Side...



- Basements East of Ave A flooded
- Boilers & electrical grids compromised
- Many 1st floor & basement residents displaced
- No functioning elevators in high-rise buildings

A dark-colored car is partially submerged in a flooded street at night. The water is dark and reflects the ambient light. The car's headlights are on, illuminating the water in front of it. The background shows a dark street with some trees and distant lights.

What happened



**8:30pm: Con-Ed plant
in the LES explodes**



**8th Street & Ave C
Police Precinct**







The morning after















**The only water source for
many residents in the LES**






**GOOD OLD LOWER EAST SIDE +
~PEOPLE POWERED RELIEF~**

COMMUNITY RESPONSE:

-  Food
-  Critical supplies (i.e. water, batteries, flashlights)
-  Mental health support
-  Translation/interpretation
-  Clothing
-  Medical support
-  Spiritual care
-  Volunteer housing
-  Shelter
-  Medical supplies
-  Information/referrals
-  Legal services

 Flooded area





**Nearly 3,000
volunteers**

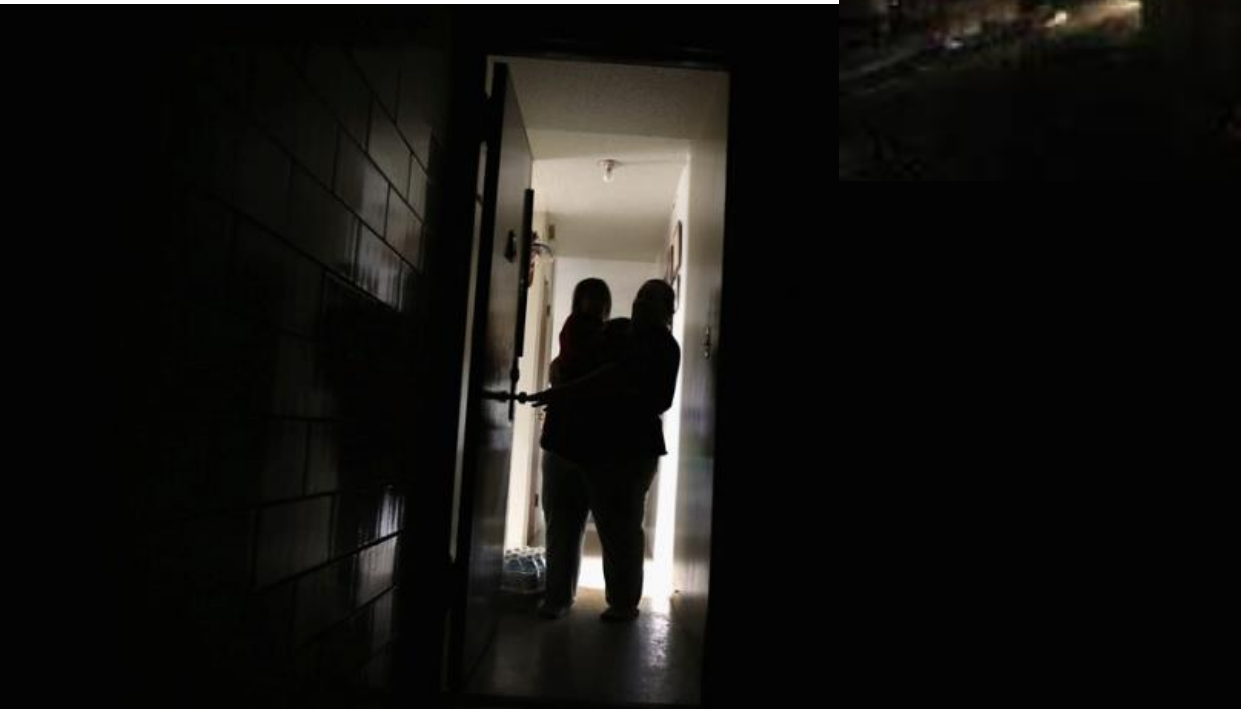


Provided
immediate relief
to more than
15,000 households.



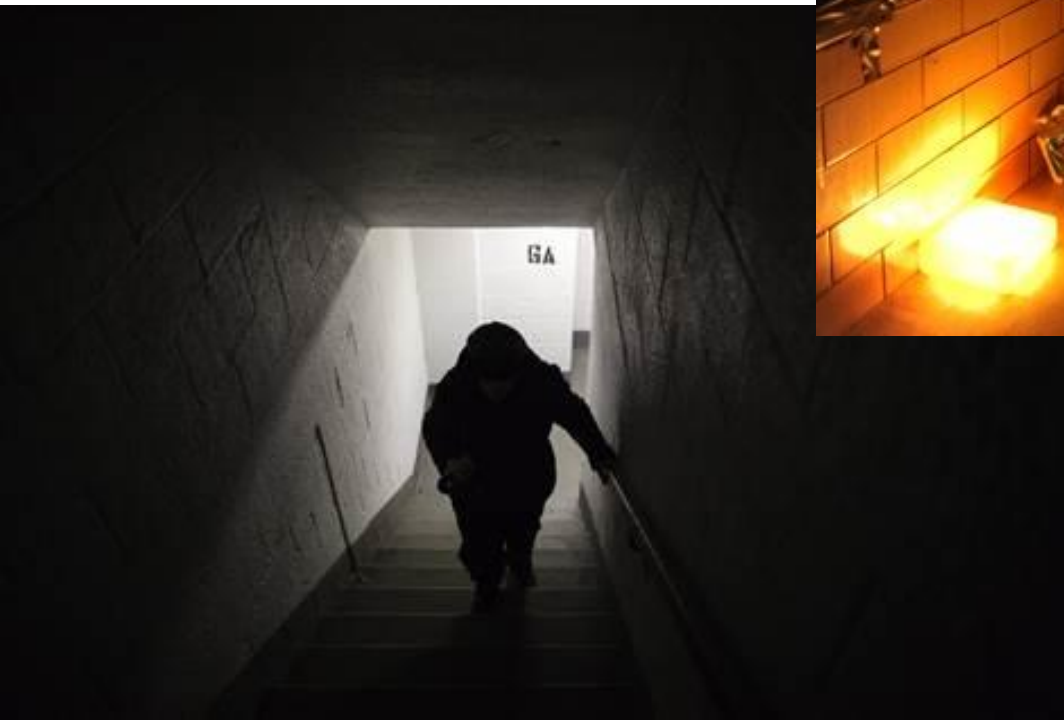


Special Challenges in Public Housing



“Over half of city residents affected by Sandy live in Public Housing.”

**LES home to more
than 15,000 units
of PH**



- **No electricity**
- **No running water**
- **No heat or hot water**

Other issues after Sandy

- **Evictions**
- **Closing businesses**
- **Increased electrical bills**
- **Lack of repairs**
- **Health impacts:**
Exposure to mold & other hazards

Building Long-Term Resiliency



Lower East Side Long Term Recovery Group:



1. Address community's unmet needs
2. Create a community disaster preparedness and recovery plan; &
3. Explore community driven mitigation/solutions.

The LTRG/LES Ready has 25+ local organizations currently participating.

Building Partnerships & Engaging Community

- **Citywide, statewide, and National Coalitions**
- **Federal Government and Private Institutions - Rebuild by Design**
- **State Government - NY Rising**
- **New York City Housing Authority**
- **NYC Government – Mayor's office of RR**
- **Universities**

Sandy Regional Assembly



Sandy Regional Assembly **RECOVERY AGENDA**

Recovery from the ground up:
Strategies for community-based
resiliency in New York and New Jersey

April 2013

Copyright © 2013 by Sandy Regional Assembly

NYC Government



NYC

Hurricane Sandy After Action

Report and Recommendations
to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg

May 2013

Deputy Mayor Linda I. Gibbs, Co-Chair
Deputy Mayor Caswell F. Holloway, Co-Chair

Recommendations

42. Formalize the borough recovery director structure and deploy staff to the field sooner after the storm to work with community organizations and lay the groundwork for relief operations.

Recommendations

48. Develop a vulnerable populations/homebound door-to-door service Task Force and Action Plan that includes specific operational timelines and leverages community groups and other advocacy organizations, as well as state and federal resources. This plan will leverage the work of the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics and improved staff training to coordinate data collection and sharing.

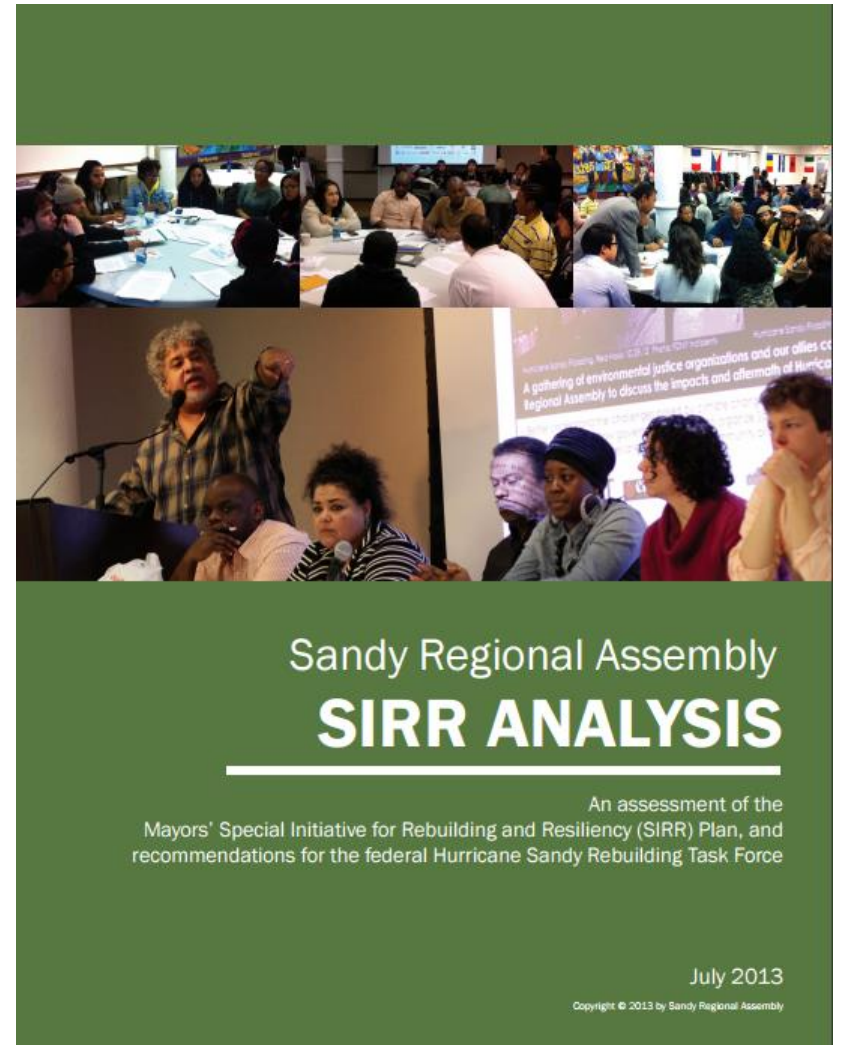
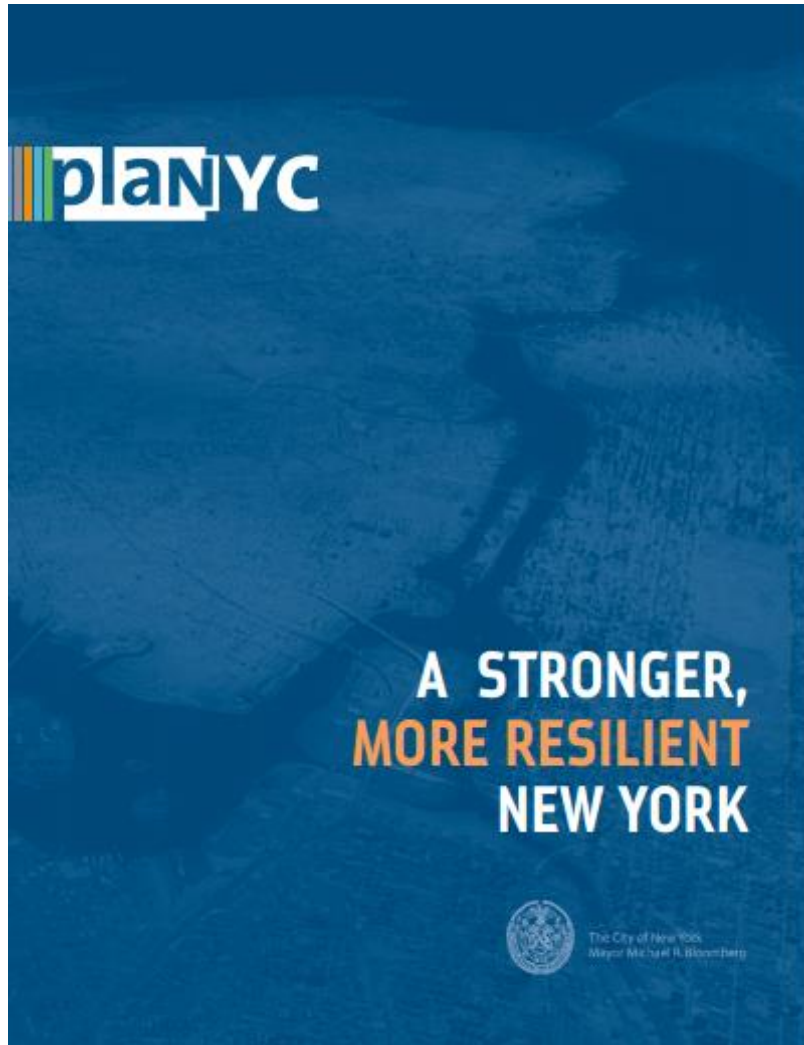
53. Conduct a preliminary needs assessment in each storm-impacted community prior to the activation of Restoration Centers to determine the community's greatest needs and tailor the available services to these needs.

- Work with partner organizations to focus their scope of services on the most critical community needs that are distinct from immediate food, water, and other material goods needs.

Recommendations

55. Expand NYC Service's emergency preparedness plan that pre-identifies partners with the capacity to manage volunteers in various roles on a large scale and across multiple affected areas.

Mayors' Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) Plan



ALLIANCE FOR A JUST REBUILDING



TURNING THE TIDE:



HOW OUR NEXT MAYOR SHOULD TACKLE
SANDY REBUILDING

www.rebuildajustnyc.org

July 2013

WEATHERING THE STORM

Rebuilding a More Resilient
New York City Housing Authority
Post-Sandy

A REPORT BY

The Alliance for a Just Rebuilding
ALJRN
Community Development Project
at the Urban Justice Center
Community Voices Heard
Faith in New York
Families United for Racial and Economic Equality
Good Old Lower East Side
Red Hook Initiative and
New York Communities in Change

How Sandy Rebuilding Can Reduce Inequality in New York City



A Plan of Action for Mayor de Blasio from Sandy Survivors



February 2014
www.rebuildajustnyc.org

Universities



INFORMED, CONNECTED, ADAPTIVE, PREPARED:
A VISION FOR A MORE RESILIENT
LOWER EAST SIDE



December 2013
Prepared for the Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
by Pratt Institute Fundamentals of Planning Studio, Fall 2013



Pratt



**THE
NEW
SCHOOL**

Internships
Case Studies
Collaborations

Rebuild By Design





NY Rising

**Community emergency
preparedness program**
IV-3



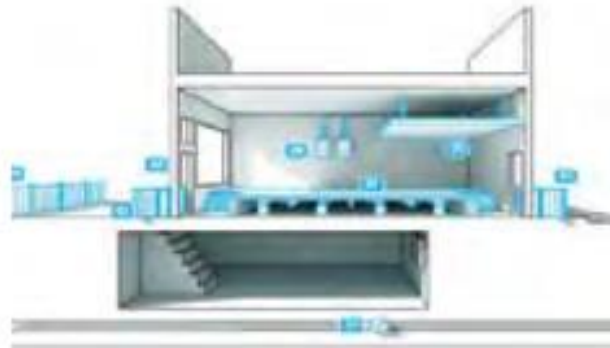
**Community resource/recovery
centers and CBO grant program**
IV-9



**Residential resiliency and
education program**
IV-19



**Small business resiliency and
education program**
IV-27



Stormwater capture study

IV-33



Targeted flood protection strategy for lower West Street

IV-49



Coastal protection study for east and west side

IV-59



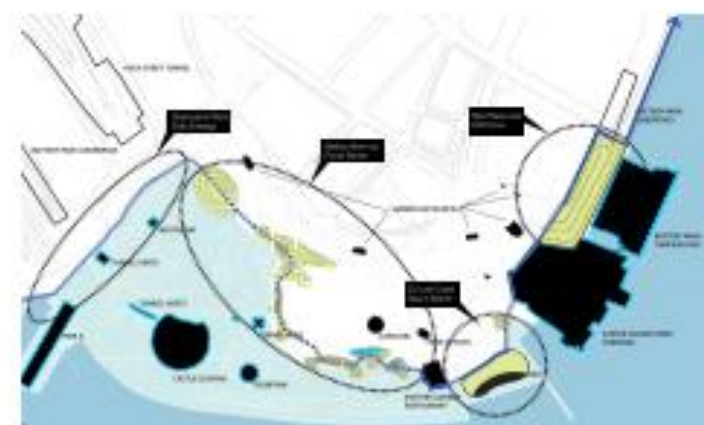
Wetland creation at East River Park

IV-39



Berming and deployable walls at Battery Park

IV-43



Gardens Rising

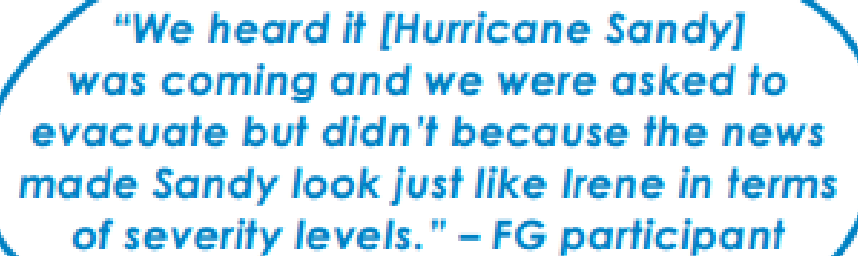


Listening & Learning from Our Community

**Getting LES Ready: Findings,
Lessons & Recommendations**

Finding 1. Majority did not evacuate

The majority of LES residents **did not evacuate** before Hurricane Sandy hit & many decided to “shelter in place.”



"We heard it [Hurricane Sandy] was coming and we were asked to evacuate but didn't because the news made Sandy look just like Irene in terms of severity levels." – FG participant

Recommendations for Evacuation

New York City Government:

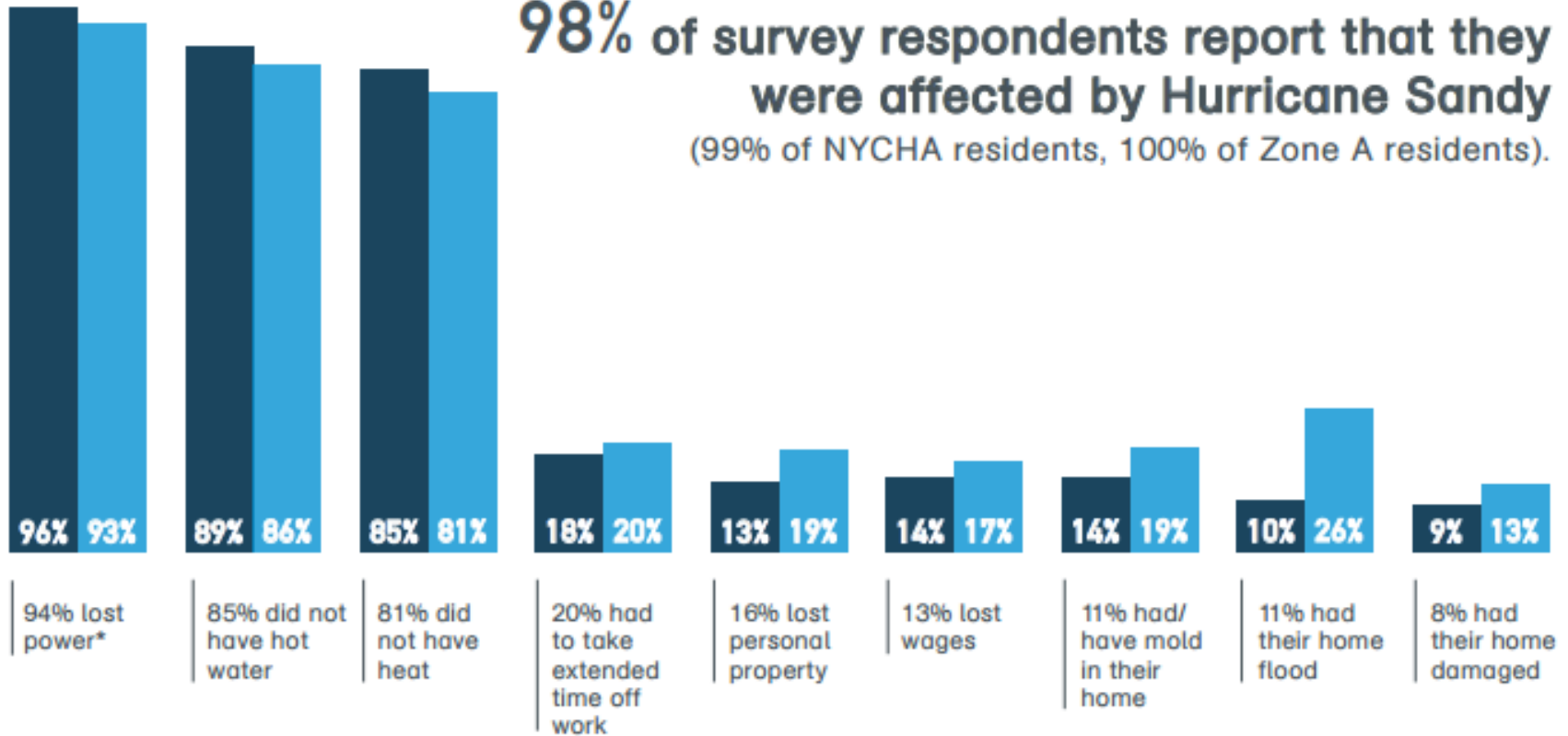
- Evacuation Preparation
- Safe & Accessible shelters
- Make shelters info available in at least Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, and Russian.
- Provide Shuttle buses

LES Ready:

- Ongoing education & awareness campaigns
- Trainings for residents
 - How to shelter in place;
 - What supplies to have;
 - What actions to take if you don't have power, water, heat, etc.
- Make sure people are prepared to evacuate
 - Evacuation info on buildings
 - Families have plans.

Finding 2. LES residents severely impacted

98% of survey respondents report that they were affected by Hurricane Sandy
(99% of NYCHA residents, 100% of Zone A residents).



Recommendations to Reduce Impact

New York City Government:

- Facilities
 - Medical supplies & attn, etc.
- Charging Stations
 - Solar Powered; Off the Grid

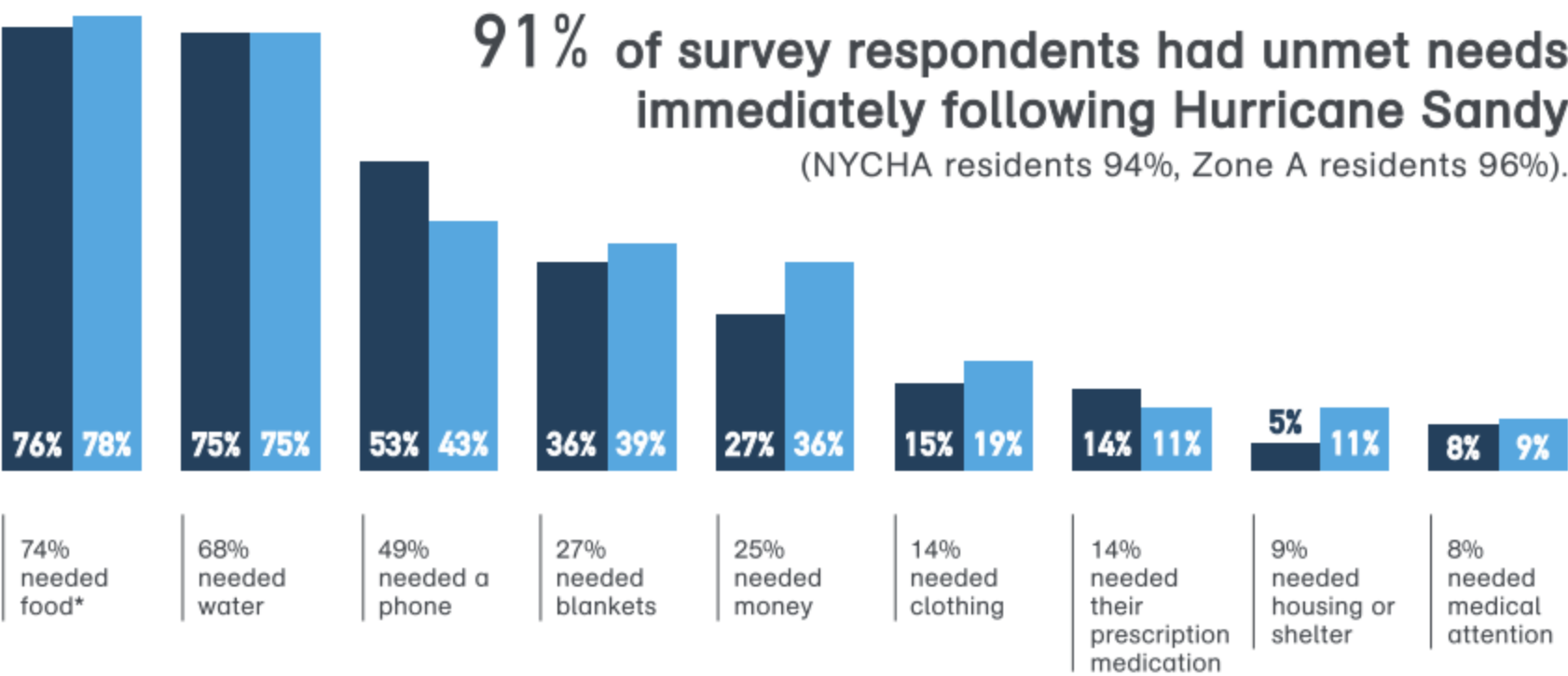
NYC & NYCHA

- Cogeneration (CHP) capacity in Zone 1 developments
- Boilers
 - Temporary & flood-proof

LES Ready:

- Go bags & critical supplies
- Partnerships with medical professionals
- Prioritize homebound people with medical needs
- LES Ready Volunteer Coordinators
- LES Ready Certification Course
 - Train Volunteers before and during emergencies.

Finding 3: Many unmet needs post-Sandy



*These percentages refer to the total number of residents surveyed.

■ NYCHA RESIDENTS
■ ZONE A RESIDENTS

Recommendations to Meet Residents' Needs

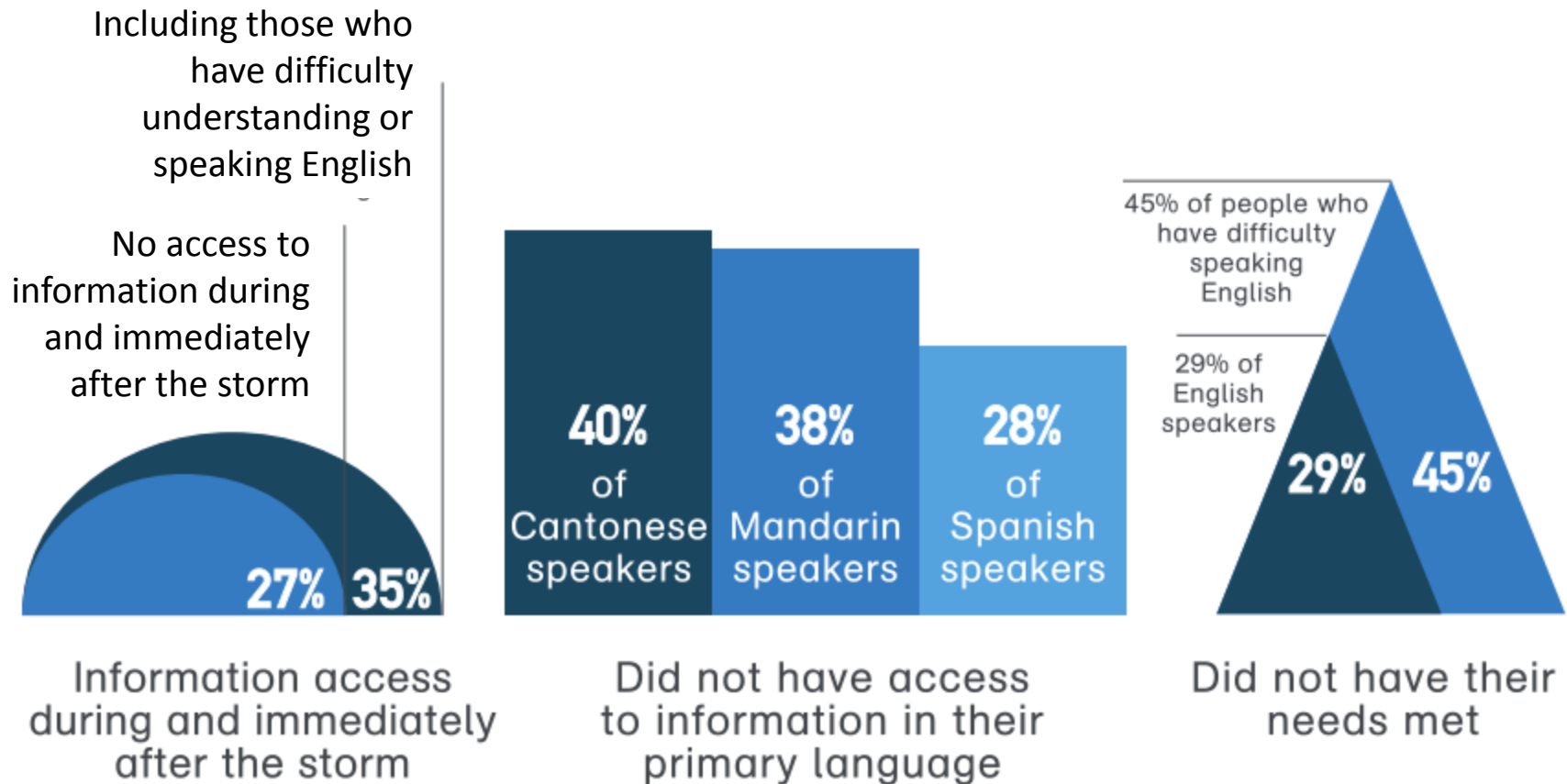
NYC, NYCHA & OEM:

- Improve communication with residents
- Invest in Building & Development 'Captains'
- Disaster Preparedness training & safety equipment for residents & workers
- Transportation Access
- Comprehensive list of vulnerable residents
- Improve & Expand Shelters

LES Ready:

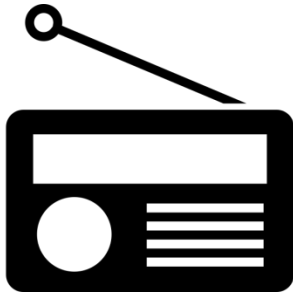
- Clear Communication Plan with City for supplies
- Create clear donation plan
- Clear plan for prescription access
- Identify non-Flood Zone facilities

Finding 4. Poor communication from City



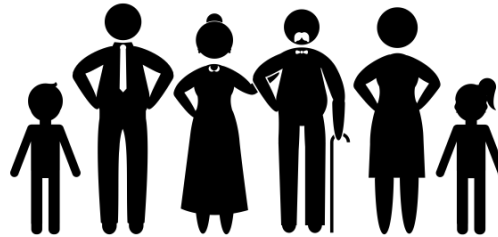
Finding 4. Poor communication from City

The most useful sources of information were radios and social networks

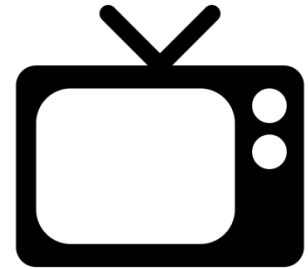


Created by Creative Stall
from Noun Project

45% got
information
from a radio



45% from a
friend, family, or
neighbor



28% from
television

Recs to Improve Communication


NYC, NYCHA & OEM:

- Communicate & coordinate with local orgs
- Should make all notices available in the most common languages of the LES
- Clarify point person for disaster response duties.
- Street-level emergency signage

LES Ready:

- People's Emergency Network, Beyond the Grid
- Alternative power systems
- Telecommunications network
- Community Hubs
- Maps (Online & Print)
- Language bank
- LES Ready Plan Refreshers
- Engage & train young people

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

-  Food
-  Critical supplies (i.e. water, batteries, flashlights)
-  Mental health support
-  Translation/interpretation
-  Clothing
-  Medical support
-  Spiritual care
-  Volunteer housing
-  Shelter
-  Medical supplies
-  Information/referrals
-  Legal services



Finding 5. Slow Relief from Government; Community as first responders.

GOVERNMENT

62% did not receive any relief from the government or other “official” sources.

- 15% received assistance from FEMA
- 12% from the Red Cross
- 11% from a NYC government agency
- 7% from CERT
- 6% from National Guard

And for those that did receive “official” assistance, **53% had to wait 4/+ days**



“A church organization came and provided free food and stayed until it was no longer a necessity. NYCHA did not.” – FG participant

COMMUNITY-BASED SOURCES

57% received assistance from at least one community source.

- 28% from a friend, family or neighbor
- 27% from community organizations
- 10% from a tenant/resident/block association
- 9% from religious organization

Finding 6. Importance of strong community bonds and infrastructure

57% of survey respondents are involved in their community.



28% are members of a community organization



19% are members of a religious institution



23% are members of a tenant, resident or block association



4% are members of the community board



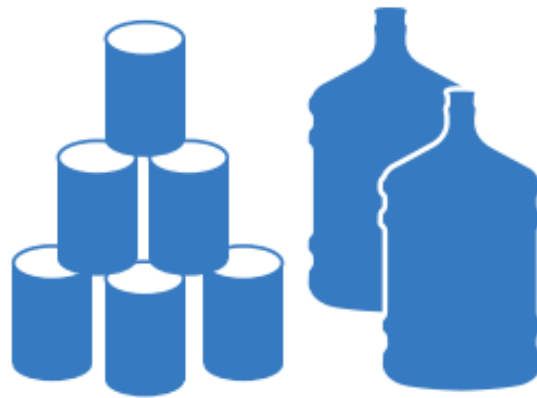
9% are involved in other ways

Finding 7. Importance of strong community bonds and infrastructure

Survey respondents also provided assistance to others despite difficulties they were facing.



49% helped neighbors, friends or family



12% donated supplies like food and money



5% volunteered with cleanup and/or rebuilding efforts

Recs to Support Community Resiliency

NYC, NYCHA & OEM:

- Invest in vibrant community centers
- Invest in community first responders
- Ongoing funding for CBOs

LES Ready:

- Clear Communication Plan with City for supplies
- LES Ready committees
- Social cohesion & connections
- Mitigation Strategies

Other Lessons

- **Gov. & CBO Partnerships:** Necessary and have proven fruitful. Assert the community's role and right to be included. Deliver on your commitments. Ask for resources. Do not rely on individual relationships.
 - Still remain a work in progress. Mechanism needed to require collaboration.
- **Impacted / Vulnerable Populations:** Continue work to strengthen and address social/income inequality--issues at forefront of work and must have real benefits.
 - Challenge to keep engaged the further away from the disaster and with other pressing day to day needs.
- **Maintaining Coalition/Long-term Work:** Keep partners engaged and energized, constantly base build and recruit new groups, review accomplishments, and plan together--keep the work fresh. Our next steps include developing comprehensive community resiliency plan, bringing renewable energy work to LES, and more.
 - Continued participation requires building institutional memory.
- **New Spaces/Areas of Work:** EDA, NPA, NY Renews (NYCEJA & Alliance for just rebuilding), NYCEJA

Major Accomplishments

- ESCRP - \$505 Million
- LMCR - \$311 Million
- Solarize NYC
- Beyond the Grid (Micro-grid) - \$100,000
- 5 Disaster Centers for the LES
- \$4+ Million for CBO Recovery & Resiliency
- Engaged thousands of residents

CONCLUSION

- **Equitable Adaptation:**
 - Center communities most impacted by climate change
 - Address root causes of structural injustices
 - Community-Determination
 - Reparations
 - Transgress Systems of Oppression
- **Increasing the efficacy of CBOs**
 - Communication & Co-Planning (Gov)
 - Funding
 - Resources



Thank You!

www.goles.org

www.lesready.org

