

Piermont Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Assessment

For use by the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force

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The Climate Smart Resiliency Planning assessment (CSRP) is a checklist to identify gaps and opportunities in planning.

As part of the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force effort, the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning tool was used to evaluate opportunities for Piermont to improve its community resilience to climate change. The assessment reviews many long- and short-term aspects of storm and climate change preparedness by reviewing village planning documents, activities, and management. Several municipal staff and volunteers were engaged in the process of completing the assessment. Initiating a group dialogue around these issues has highlighted the need for further action to prepare for a changing climate. The process involved both interviews and a group review of the assessment results, and took just under three months to complete.

Plans and regulations included were:

- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
- Rockland County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Village zoning code and ordinances

Municipal staff and volunteers engaged in the Climate Smart Planning assessment:

- Lisa DeFeciani, Village Trustee
- Ken DeGennaro, Engineer/floodplain manager
- Dan Goswick, Fire Department
- Charlie Schaub, Building Inspector
- Steve Silverberg, Village Trustee
- Stephanie Tassello, Village Clerk
- Tom Temple, Superintendent, DPW

The task force could consider key opportunities identified in the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning assessment in its final recommendations to the village.

The completed assessment highlights areas of opportunity for the Village of Piermont to prepare for climate change and flooding in its municipal operations and planning.

These areas of opportunity can be employed by the task force to craft recommendations for a flood-resilient Piermont waterfront.

Piermont is a relatively small and long-standing community that has historically relied heavily on personal communication and local knowledge. The community has a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program that was created in 1992 and is currently being updated. Recent flooding events have highlighted the need for Piermont to incorporate climate resiliency more formally into its planning and procedures. The following opportunities emerged under each of the sections of the Climate Smart Resilience Planning assessment.

Section 2 - Risk and vulnerability assessment

- Educate municipal staff on risk and vulnerability assessments and maps created for the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force, as well as coastal hazards and risks such as storm surge and sea level rise.
- Train emergency managers in the use of risk and vulnerability assessments and maps.
- Formalize the process for tracking repetitive loss properties in order to participate in FEMA's Community Rating System program.

Section 3- Public outreach and engagement

- Share risk and vulnerability assessments and findings from the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force with all appropriate officials in Piermont and neighboring communities and with county officials.
- Take advantage of training opportunities from federal, state and local partners to improve staff and volunteer understanding of tools available to help plan for and respond to flood emergencies.
- Improve public outreach on storm preparedness and flood-mitigation options for families, businesses, institutions, structures and facilities. Consider referring home builders to FEMA's coastal construction manual.
- Design and install high-water-mark signs in the waterfront area to educate the community about flood risk and provide reference to additional sources of flood preparedness information.
- Put Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) map on village website with directions on how to interpret it.
- Collaborate with other waterfront communities to improve understanding of and planning for coastal hazards such as sea-level rise and storm surge. Work together to assess existing and needed stream gauges and other tools that provide real-time water-elevation information in flood situations.

- Collaborate with Rockland County and Orangetown regarding possible emergency access via railroad grade, coordinating on sewer maintenance issues, and further storm-proofing of the pump station.

Section 4 – Planning integration

- Incorporate findings of the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force into the new Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.
- Officially adopt the NYS sea level rise projections.
- Consider the creation of a Municipal Master Plan that describes coastal hazards and other climate hazards relevant to Piermont and sets a goal for flood resilience.
- Incorporate findings from the Piermont Waterfront Resilience Task Force into the Rockland County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (5-year update) and other relevant plans.
- Recommend that Rockland County incorporate climate change impacts, including sea level rise, into the Rockland County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (5-year update),
- Continue seeking funding to create a Floodplain Management Plan (expanding on the flood damage ordinance).
- Integrate departmental funding requests into a village-wide Capital Improvement Plan that incorporates and prioritizes the needs of all departments, along with phased adaptation of infrastructure to flooding.
- Incorporate cost-benefit analyses and long-term flood risk due to sea level rise and stronger storms into asset design and the prioritization of strategies to manage municipal assets.
- Identify areas village-wide for fortification, accommodation or relocation of assets in flood-prone areas (the task force has begun this process).
- Consider revising and adopting Historic Preservation Plan to include flood adaptation.

Section 5 - Disaster preparedness and recovery

- Inform residents of NY-ALERT and use it to communicate emergencies.
- Explore the need for comprehensive emergency management plan (CEMP), which may include an evacuation plan.
- Continue to implement a more robust alert/communication system, including communications during emergencies with power outages.
- Evaluate a possible expansion of the existing emergency shelter (the fire station) versus an alternate location (outside of the flood hazard area).
- Organize emergency preparedness and communications networks by neighborhood.

Section 6 - Hazard mitigation implementation

- Consider including the state's 2-foot freeboard requirement, or exceeding it, in the local code, pending consultation with the state and floodplain manager.
- Update building code to support amphibious/floating homes.
- Require property owners in flood-prone areas to improve flood resilience for new, substantially damaged or substantially improved buildings above the FEMA standard.
- Revise zoning to better address flood risk.
- Proceed with application to the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System to reduce insurance rates for residents and businesses.
- Evaluate other option to reduce the impact of increasing flood insurance rates on the community.
- Finalize pledge to become a Climate Smart Community and take actions to achieve points in the new certification program.
- Conduct a study to analyze adaptation and relocation options for flood-risk infrastructure, including the Department of Public Works' storage facility, Fire Department's boathouse, pump station, and roads.