Building Resilient Parks: Amy Chester
January 2018
Rebuild by Design is a process that brings together global and local expertise, regional leadership and local vision to tackle multidimensional problems that harness and cultivate strong stakeholder support and government leadership.
WHAT WE DO

1. Large Scale Regional Design Competitions
2. Innovative Processes to Address Specific Challenges
3. Research, Policy + Education
CITY ENGAGEMENTS

- **Athens**: Promoting stewardship for Lycabettus Hill
- **Oakland, CA**: Workshop Series on Effective Engagement
- **Mexico City**: Master Plan framework for Xochimilco
- **Los Angeles, CA**: Creating a process around updating building codes to encourage resilience
- **Amman**: RBD_U: program on Waste, Water, Transportation
- **San Juan, PR**: Community Led Master Plan/Resilience Pilot
- **Juarez, MX**: Design Competition for Juan Gabriel Plaza
- **Boulder, CO**: Effort to create a Resilient and Sustainable Mobile Home Park
- **Atlanta, GA**: Student design competition for Ted Turner Drive Resilience Corridor
INCREASED VULNERABILITY

- Storm Intensity (% PDI)
- Urban Population (10^9)
- Sea Level Rise (2x(1/10m))
- Temperature (°C)

YOU ARE HERE
12,383 MILES OF COASTLINE
HOW SHOULD WE PROTECT OURSELVES

HINT: NOT LIKE THIS!

Osabe, Japan
TYPICAL DESIGN PROCESS

Site
Budget
Program
Square Footage
Timeline
SOCIAL RESILIENCE

1995 Chicago Heat Wave
Killed 700 people

KLINENBERG, 2002
HURRICANE SANDY DESIGN COMPETITION
JUNE 2013 – JUNE 2014

• 10 Interdisciplinary Teams
• Northeast United States
• Federal Disaster Dollars (CDBG-DR) to be awarded by HUD
• Infrastructure should address multiple goals at the same time
• Judged on Innovation, Collaboration and Implementation

BAY AREA DESIGN CHALLENGE
JUNE 2017 – MAY 2018

• 9 Interdisciplinary Teams
• San Francisco Bay
• No federal funds
• Future planning for resilience
• Focus on sea level rise, transportation, housing and equity
COLLABRATIVE RESEARCH

- Site Visits
- Tours
- Panel Discussions
- Community Roundtables
- Neighborhood Leader Engagement
- Design Critiques
- Data Analysis
COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

- Analysis of All Stakeholders
- Government Agency Meetings
- Meetings w existing coalitions
- Forming new coalitions
- Creating unusual events (bike tours, dance parties, movie screenings, parade)
- Design Charrettes
- Brainstorming sessions
- Site tours
- Wholesale Presentations at existing meetings
MULTIPLE LAYERS OF OUTREACH
Design + Program developed with stakeholders

**DESIGN**

**INTEGRATED FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM**

**LIVELIHOODS + LEADERSHIP**

**CLEANWAY CONNECTIONS**

**EMERGENCY MARITIME SUPPLY**

**GOVERNMENT**

**FEDERAL:**
- Congressman Jose E. Serrano (NY-15)
- US Army Corps of Engineers

**STATE:**
- Assemblyman A. Crespo 85th District
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- NYS Department of Transportation

**CITY:**
- NYC Economic Development Corporation
- Office of the Mayor of New York City
- NYC Department of Environmental Protection
- NYC Office of Emergency Management
- NYC Department of City Planning
- NYC Department of Transportation
- NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

**LOCAL:**
- Community Board #2
- Community Board #2 - Environmental Committee

**COMMUNITY**

**LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS:**
- The Point Community Development Corporation
- Sustainable South Bronx
- Mothers on the Move
- Bronx River Alliance
- Rocking the Boat
- Majora Carter Group
- The Blk Projek
- Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice
- South Bronx Unite

**OTHER COMMUNITY ADVOCACY:**
- New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Pratt Center for Community Development
- Adam Liebowitz
- Mathews Nielsen
- WXY
- and more...

**INDUSTRY**

**ADVOCACY:**
- Hunts Point Economic Development Corporation
- The Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association
- Hunts Point Cooperative Market
- New Fulton Fishmarket at Hunts Point
- Smitty’s Filet House (fish wholesaler)
- Nathel & Nathel (produce wholesaler)
- Vista Food Exchange
- Anheuser-Busch Distributors
- Il Forno Bakery
- Oak Restaurant & Grill

**BUSINESSES:**
- The Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association
- New Fulton Fishmarket at Hunts Point
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- Oak Restaurant & Grill

**LABOR:**
- Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 202
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- and more...
19 PROJECTS

- San Rafael Biosphere
- Marin City Permaculture and Social Equity
- Islais Creek: BIG + ONE + Sherwood
- North Richmond: The Home Team
- San Leandro Bay: All Bay Collective
- Alameda Creek: Public Sediment
- South San Francisco Hauling

Total Water Level (Inches) above Mean High Water:

- 12
- 24
- 36
- 48
- 52
- 66
- 77
- 84
- 96
- 108
PARKS PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD RESILIENCE

• Absorb Water
• Promote Equity
• Increase Health Outcomes
• Clean Air
• Increase Habitat
• Space for Protection
• Build Social Resilience
REBUILD PROCESS PROJECT EXAMPLES

RESILIENT BY DESIGN BAY AREA
• Estuary Commons | San Leandro Bay, CA

HURRICANE SANDY DESIGN COMPETITION
• Living Breakwaters | Staten Island, NYC
• The BIG U | New York City
Estuary Commons

The People, and a Place, and a Path Forward
Restore

Wetland Area: From 100 existing acres to 300 proposed acres

Reshape creeks, sloughs and shorelines to expand riparian and wetland ecosystems, reduce fluvial flood risk, and provide protection from sea level rise.
Link

25 miles of neighborhood-shoreline connections, with a 4.5 mile loop around Oakland Estuary

Create a sinuous, Estuary-circling promenade and turn concrete channels into flourishing greenways to link neighborhoods, schools and work places to both the shoreline and regional mobility networks.
Gather

Three new recreational gathering spaces

Bring diverse communities together in thriving parks to foster social resilience, health, and access to nature.
Winner: Living Breakwaters

HUD Award: $60 Million
Grantee: New York State Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery
Location: Tottenville, Staten Island, NYC
BEACH EROSION
BREAKWATERS REDUCE WAVE ACTION
DO:

REDUCE EROSION

LESSEN WAVE IMPACTS

PROVIDE HABITAT

ENCOURAGE RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

BUILD BEACHES

DO NOT:

KEEP OUT FLOOD WATER
CREATE NICHEs
WATER HUBS
Winner: BIG U

HUD Award: $335 Million
Grantee: The City of New York (Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency, Department of Design and Construction, Department of Parks and Recreation)
Location: Lower East Side, NYC
A TAILORED APPROACH TO TRADITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: DIVERSITY!
LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE
THE BRIDGING BERM...
EQUITY IN STEWARDSHIP

- Trust for Public Land & James Lima Planning + Design
- National Analysis
- 11th Street Bridge + Bronx River Alliance Models
- Board to be comprised of local organizations
- Funding stays within the park
- Equitable distribution of permits
- Download at rebuildbydesign.org

Building Bridges

A Community-Based Stewardship Study for an Equitable East River Park

December 2018
The city’s odd storm splurge

By AMY CHESTER AND TOM WRIGHT

By 2015, the first two sections of the project — from E. 25th St. to the Brooklyn Bridge — received $511 million in federal funding, later matched by $542 million from the city, which also led dozens of meetings with residents to craft an intelligent, effective plan.

Then earlier this year, the city went dark.

A few weeks ago, after several months of silence, the mayor’s office announced radical changes to the northern portion of this project. Instead of building a berm, or narrow shelf of land, alongside the FDR Drive, and leaving East River Park to act as a sponge during major storms, they now plan to completely raise the entire, recently renovated park 8 to 10 feet.

It’s hard to determine whether the new design will be better or worse since the city hasn’t released any details. We do know a few things: The northern portion of the Big U will now cost an additional $700 million (bringing the price tag for this section to $1.45 billion); offers no additional flood protection; no additional community amenities; and should have already been well underway.

Spending $700 million to get a better park or more flood protection might be welcomed, but that’s not what the city is offering. Instead, it seems, this money is buying the city out of having to grapple with two thorny problems.

The first: inconveniencing drivers on the FDR, which would require overnight closures to build the original design.

The second challenge is more complex. The original design called for East River Park to flood in the event of a big storm. Other privately managed parks including Brooklyn Bridge Park and Domino Park are designed to do this, and provide an extra layer of protection to their surrounding communities.

But the Parks Department doesn’t have a maintenance budget or process to restore city parks after a major storm event. Instead of fixing that problem, the city proposes to skirt it by lifting the whole park. That seems unwise.

The city has said that this new approach will shorten construction by six months, but for a project that is designed to last for more than a generation, that’s already been slow-walked, let’s make sure we get it right.

Mayor de Blasio should engage with the public to determine the best use of an additional $700 million. Perhaps that will mean using the funds to extend the Big U to the Battery, which was underfunded. Perhaps we should use the money to create a maintenance budget for the city to maintain flood infrastructure over time.

If they want to insist their way forward is the best, let’s hear them make the case.

Chester is managing director of Rebuild by Design. Wright is the president of Regional Plan Association, one of the original partners of the Rebuild by Design competition.
DISCUSSION:

• What is a resilient park? Does it need to protect something other than a park? Does it need to be floodable?
• As our governments face new climate realities, how will we reorganize municipal budgets to fund parks to maintain flood infrastructure? How will we train parks employees?
• How do we ensure equitable facilities in parks?
• How can parks take on additional roles for education and awareness? (National parks are a great example!)
THANK YOU

Amy Chester, Managing Director

achester@rebuildbydesign.org