Red Hook Recovery Project
Hurricane Sandy
An Urban Disaster
Overview

• Impact of Changing weather
• Urban Preparedness
  – Overview of preparedness efforts
  – Complexities of urban planning (Ex. NYC)
• Understanding Community
• Proposed Models
Points to Consider

• How well do you know the communities you serve?

• What does a “community assessment” look like in for your organization, and who does it serve?

• What does your current long-term community recovery work look like?
Changing Weather Patterns

• The Earth is warmer now than it has ever been
  – What does that mean to emergency management?

• We can anticipate:
  – More hurricanes / More intense hurricanes
  – More flooding
  – More beach erosion
  – Colder Winters / Hotter Summers
  – More droughts / More wildfires
Changing Weather Patterns

• We’ve built our towns and cities with the local weather in mind, but now that weather is changing.
• It’s not about how emergency management is changing; it’s about how the world is changing.
• Emergency Management needs to be flexible enough to get out ahead of it.
NYC Planning Like Never Before

- **Average Tornadoes in NY**
  - 1961 – 1990 = 5/year
  - 1991 – 2010 = 10/year

- **Significant Storms in NY**
  - 1975 – 1999 = 17 over 24 years
  - 2000 – 2012 = 18 over 12 years

- **Heat Waves**
  - 2012 = 4 Heat Waves in NYC

- **Earthquakes**
  - Not a new threat, just bigger population
NYC Preparedness

• 2005 - 2006, after Katrina NYC OEM re-drafted Coastal Storm plan

• Regular Nor'easters

• First real test of the CS plan came in 2011, Hurricane Irene
NYC Preparedness

What we Prepared for...

- Flood Maps Published in 1983
- All Zone A was flooded by storm surge as predicted
- Parts of Zone B (at the A/B borders) flooded as well also as predicted (see NYC Coastal Storm Plan)
NYC Preparedness

What we Prepared for...

- Sandy was a Cat 3 at its peak
- Estimated a cat 2 at landfall
- Sandy was a cat 1 when it made landfall in New Jersey

Category 1

- Extent of Surge
  - Uninhabited
  - Inhabited

- Population in Surge
  - New York: 480,000
  - New Jersey: 300,000
  - Total: 780,000

Category 2

- Extent of Surge
  - Uninhabited
  - Inhabited

- Population in Surge
  - New York: 1,344,000
  - New Jersey: 532,000
  - Total: 1,876,000
What we Prepared for...

- Ordered mandatory evacuation for all of Zone A
- Recommended evacuation for all of Zone B
- Hurricane Shelters opened City-wide
- Transportation shut down City-Wide
- Con Ed Power shut down in flood zones
Tour of NYC

Rockaways

• These are not vacation homes, people live here, the subway runs here

• Water front is only “vacation-like” in this area about 3 months out of the year.
Tour of NYC

Coney Island

• Mostly high-rise buildings, apartments on the waterfront
• Again, not vacation home
Tour of NYC

Staten Island

- Very residential – more suburb
- Smallest borough by population
- Lots of green space
- Fewer rentals, more owner-occupied
Tour of NYC

Red Hook

• More industrial, old warehouses
• An “Up and Coming” neighborhood – more industrial areas, just starting to see a rise in small business, community enrichment outside of City offerings
Tour of NYC

New York City Beaches
What does this mean to EM

- City-wide planning is too broad
- Long-term Community Recovery Planning is needed
- The community knows more than you do
What We Found in Red Hook

A Whole Community Model
Red Hook Geography
Red Hook Demographics

• The neighborhood is primarily rentals (72%)  
• City Housing makes up 60% of the neighborhood
Red Hook Demographics

- 63% Hispanic
- 22% Black
- 11% White
- Education level = 60% high school or less (compare to City)
- Median income = $24,600 (Compare to Brooklyn at $44k)
Red Hook Demographics

• Historically marginalized

• Limited resources, no real political pull in the local government

• Red Hook is an easily forgotten pocket
Post Sandy

It was hard for residents to know what to do...

• Coffey Park was full of tents, FEMA workers, Red Cross and Salvation Army workers

• Volunteers and random groups showed up with clothes, food, money
Post Sandy

Services included...

• Disaster filing (FEMA & SBA)

• Hot food, hygiene kits and supplies

• Charging stations for phones and electronics
Post Sandy

Volunteers...

• There were/still are multiple organizations set up to receive volunteers

• Volunteer group gutted houses/stores, helped sanitation with garbage
Post Sandy

By the end of November

- Shop owners were on their own
- Residents had no more services and still had no heat or power
- Attention had shifted to other areas of NYC
Post Sandy

Deeper Issues Started Showing

• Post Traumatic Stress

• Feeling of hopelessness

• Community Morale was low, a general belief that the government didn’t care about Red Hook or its residents
Tell Your Story Campaign

What is it?
• A tool for Community Assessment

What is the goal
• Identify current and long-term needs of a specific community
Tell Your Story Campaign

How does it work?

• Set up center for people to come in and tell their story
  – Therapeutic
  – Historical reference
  – Stories provide assessment
Tell Your Story Campaign

What we Learned Post Sandy

• Communication from the City to the Community
• Community Assessments
• Expectation Setting
• Empathy
Tell Your Story Campaign

What we Learned Post Sandy

• We need to empower communities

• CERT in Urban Environments

• Urban Housing Issues
Tell Your Story Campaign

What we Learned Post Sandy

• There are so many resources dedicated to response and seemingly nothing dedicated to recovery

• Response workers do not understand the community
Tell Your Story Campaign

Current Status

• Tell Your Story Center: 268 Stories Collected

• Participants:
  – Residents (Owners, Landlords, Renters and Public Housing)
  – Business (Small Business, Large Business)
  – Politicians (Local and State)
Thank You