

The New York Recovery Network: E-Bulletin

Published June 12, 2014

Headlines

Q & A with Henk Ovink

Henk Ovink, a senior advisor to HUD and co-chair of HUD's Rebuild by Design competition, speaks about the competition process, some of the proposals that were honored with awards and the next steps.

[Read More](#)

Rebuild by Design Awards Announced

The winners of HUD's Rebuild by Design competition will receive money from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to begin implementing their project designs. This article previews the six winning projects and their strategies to rebuild vulnerable hurricane-impacted communities.

[Read More](#)

Building a Culture of Resiliency

When disruptions occur, some organizations experience profound consequences while others withstand the event and bounce back. This article examines one framework that allows organizations to persevere through disruptions and describes how organizations can work to instill a resilient culture.

[Read More](#)

Recovery News

[Feasibility study for Manhattan levee released](#)

NYCEDC, May 2014

[New York starts buying Sandy-damaged Long Island homes](#)

Newsday, June 5, 2014

[New York to receive nearly \\$540 million through Rebuild by Design](#)

Next City, June 2, 2014

[Nassau resiliency plan wins post-Sandy funds contest](#)

Newsday, June 2, 2014

Upcoming Events

June 17: Center for Health Innovation, Adelphi University
[Symposium: First Responder and Community Resilience Issues on Long Island](#)

June 17: National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation
[Webinar: Strengthening Regional Economic Resilience through Business Continuity Planning](#)

June 24-26: International Center for Enterprise Preparedness
[Global Risk Forum 2014: Metro NY Regional Disaster Joint Planning](#)

June 25: NEWMOA
[Hurricane Sandy - Debris Management Lessons Learned - Solid Waste Program Webinar](#)

Job Postings

[Senior Program Manager - Operations](#)

[Community Planner](#)

[Regional Lead](#)

[Paralegal Storm Response](#)

[Outreach and Engagement Counselor](#)

[Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator](#)

[Reporting Analyst](#)

Q&A with Rebuild by Design's Henk Ovink

The New York Sandy Recovery Field Office had the honor of interviewing Henk Ovink, a Dutch water management specialist who was hired by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan to bring his expertise to the United States. Ovink is a senior advisor to HUD on long-term planning, design and innovation and, along with Donovan, co-chair of HUD's Rebuild by Design competition.

The Rebuild by Design competition was created by President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force as a way to develop collaborative capacity to improve resilience in communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Design teams from around the world worked to create coalitions with local and regional stakeholders to develop responsive proposals.

Officials have announced six competition awards totaling more than \$920 million to fund resilience projects in New York and New Jersey. In this Q&A, Ovink says the U.S is beginning to embrace the need to prepare for climate change.

Q. What will happen with the four proposals that were finalists but not selected for Rebuild By Design awards? Can those communities succeed in getting funding to make their plans a reality?

A. Rebuild by Design doesn't stop with presenting ideas; it takes resilience as a core mission and collaboration by design as a way to deliver. We will continue to work with all communities and teams on finding opportunities to strengthen their proposals, focusing on parts that add value and working toward replicating innovative ideas uncovered through the competition. We will seek funding, partners and opportunities to further these ideas.

Q. What did you look for when determining which projects were viable?

A. The research and analysis stage of Rebuild by Design was dedicated to uncovering all interdependencies and vulnerabilities in the Sandy-affected region. Teams were asked to use that research to focus on opportunities that would add resilience value to the region against future uncertainties. This led to fact-driven designs that set the teams up for collaboration as a way to get a deeper understanding during the design stage.

Out of this research the teams came up with different opportunities that were proposed to HUD and a jury that included other federal partners. The selected ten finalists addressed a full range of the region's vulnerabilities.

The competition was created to focus on innovative ways to build resilience. It was intended to set up a new standard for regional resilience, helping to identify conditions on the ground that can become examples for other locations and drive policy reform. Each submitted proposal had a layered approach including community engagement and a regional strategy with local interventions that could drive this regional, comprehensive approach.

In the end, the proposals were evaluated on their impact on affected communities and the region. Can they make a difference? Will they reform the way we think and act around resilience? Are they part of driving this cultural change?

Clearly all proposals also needed to be feasible. We developed an alternative benefit-cost analysis framework that could address the regional scale, the long-term and the comprehensiveness of these proposals. Each team developed an implementation plan and identified other funding sources.

Q. You have mentioned how our political boundaries, such as state lines, make it a challenge to collaborate. Rebuild By Design rewarded collaboration. What are some other suggestions that would help us develop solutions to work across boundaries in developing resiliency projects?

A. Rebuild by Design proved again that this is a region defined by needs and urgencies, not by governance. Finding ways to collaborate across state, county and city lines and across communities, sectors and institutes is key. Rebuild by Design was founded on this collaborative model.

Is this enough? Who knows? There are examples across the world and even in this region where the institutionalization of regional collaboration became very successful. In the current conditions I think it should not be about a new institution. But I would really like to take this regional governance question a step further. The Regional Plan Association is in the midst of developing its Fourth Regional Plan. Perhaps that process, in which Rebuild by Design is a partner, can lead again to not only informing policy and regulatory reform but also governance reform.

Q. In discussions on Hunts Point, a proposal that appears to require further study, what were the factors in its selection? What are the complexities of protecting this major food distribution point?

A. Hunts Point is the New York metropolitan region's food distribution center located in the South Bronx. If the market went offline due to a storm, the region would be without food in two to five days. Though Hunts Point is located in a floodplain, it was miraculously saved from Sandy through a number of coincidences including the moon, tide, surge, wind etc.

Hunts Point is also more than the food market; it is part of the Bronx and the peninsula holds a vulnerable and well-organized community. There are a lot of social, cultural, ecological and economic vulnerabilities that come together here and have an impact on the whole region. Coming up with a new model for resilience would not only benefit the market and therefore the metro region, it would be inclusive of the entire community, bringing better quality of life and a more prosperous future for all living and working here.

There are a lot of discussions regarding the long-term redevelopment of the food market. This award will ensure that the Rebuild by Design process can drive that discussion and that building resilience can be part of planning.

Q. Which proposal do you feel is the best example of learning how to live near water?

A. All proposals focus on this question and find different answers. And that multitude and variety of answers is exactly what defines living with water. There is no one way, just as there is no silver bullet to safeguard this region. We have to collaborate and invest on all scales and with

all stakeholders. Water connects our economy with our ecology; it is the foundation of our culture. As a country, we forgot this. But disasters, climate change and the impact of these devastating events brought it back to the forefront. It is up to us to turn water into an asset again, for living with water is this balancing act where risks and uncertainties are managed in a collaborative way.

Rebuild by Design Awards Announced

The six winners of HUD's Rebuild by Design competition will receive approximately \$920 million from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to begin the process of implementing their successful project designs. The projects that focused on New York City included a protective berm at the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a "living breakwater" system along Staten Island's south shore and a study to protect the Hunt's Point food distribution hub in the south Bronx. Winning projects are also located in New York State, southern Nassau County and New Jersey.

The winners were among 150 entries submitted by international design teams to rebuild vulnerable hurricane-impacted communities and to create resilient solutions to meet their unmet infrastructure and housing needs. Developing a sustainable economic environment and vigorous community engagement was a significant component for the successful award winners. These ideas will serve as models for future management of severe storms and climate change.

The implementation timetable for these projects may continue for many years. The third round of CDBG funding of \$600 million will help support the first phase of project implementation, but additional funding will be required to advance many of the projects' objectives.

The six winning designs include:

"The Big U" in Manhattan that will include a "bridging berm" at East River Park to protect the Lower East Side community from rising sea levels and severe storms. Greater accessibility to the river will be provided by bridges over East River Drive.

The "Living Breakwaters" proposal in the Tottenville section of Staten Island will reduce wave action and erosion and reduce future risk by reviving ecologies and developing habitats. These efforts will be paired with local communities and educational institutions.

Funding for the "Lifelines" study to flood-protect the Hunt's Point market will include systems to safeguard the entire community and build capacity and social resilience in the poorest congressional district in the country. The Hunt's Point market is an essential part of the region's food chain.

The "Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge" strategic design will provide Hoboken, New Jersey with a long-term strategy for responding to storm surge and chronic flash flooding along the waterfront. Parts of Weehawken and Jersey City will also be provided with a combination of hard infrastructure and coastal defenses.

The “New Meadowlands” project will include a system of berms and the restoration of wetlands to reduce flooding and sewer overflows. It will also lessen storm surges in adjacent communities. CDBG funds will be used for the first phase of the project.

CDBG funds will also be used to implement the first phase of “Living with the Bay.” Storm water inundation and storm surge around the north-south tributaries of the Mill River in southern Nassau County will be mitigated by transforming the river into a blue-green corridor that stores and filters water. Additional public space and new urban development will be created with these improvements.

Building a Culture of Resiliency

As excerpted from The Resilient Enterprise: Overcoming Vulnerability for Competitive Advantage by Yossi Sheffi.

Many businesses were affected by Hurricane Sandy, but some fared better than others. The storm stifled communications, made offices and storefronts uninhabitable, prevented employees from working and disrupted many systems that organizations relied upon. Although some organizations and businesses closed up shop for good after the storm, others returned and became stronger in the process.

What makes some organizations able to withstand disruptions when others fail? What enables certain organizations to contain disruptions and bounce back?

Research has found that one cause is a culture of resilience.

The culture of an organization can be defined as the pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by an organization’s members. These beliefs and expectations shape the behavior of its members.

A culture of resilience provides employees with a set of principles to guide them when the unexpected occurs or when formal policy does not address a given situation. Culture is an elusive quality to manage. To encourage a culture of resilience, organizations should adopt the following traits:

Continuous communication within an organization. Flexible and resilient organizations continuously share information. Communications during disruptions provide knowledge about the immediate state of the system so that employees can make informed decisions quickly.

Communication should not be excessive because employees may tune out if they receive too much or irrelevant information. Problems in communication can also arise if employees are not empowered to act on the information or if there is a lack of trust between the sender and the employee who is expected to act upon it.

Decision making at all levels. Employees close to the front line are most likely to spot a problem situation first. Their immediate reaction can prevent a bad situation from developing into something far worse. Resilient organizations have employees who internalize the general mission of the organization and are rewarded for taking initiative rather than disciplined for making mistakes. Management is still very involved in operations; their knowledge of the environment provides them with the confidence to let employees respond.

Passion for the mission. This cultural trait of a flexible and resilient organization is defined as a personal, deeply felt concern and responsibility to serve the objective of the organization. Organizations can work to develop this trait in a number of ways, starting from changes in the hiring process to aligning the financial success of the company to that of the individual (for example, through stock options).

Conditioning the organization for disruption. Through frequent and multiple small challenges, resilient organizations have conditioned themselves to be innovative and flexible in the face of larger high-impact disruptions such as Hurricane Sandy. Conditioning drives a firm's culture and develops a "get ready for anything" mentality that seeps through all the levels of the firm.

This conditioning can be done through exercises, planning and regularly asking the following questions:

1. What can go wrong?
2. What is the likelihood it will happen?
3. How severe would the impact of this event be to our organization?

To build more resilience, review your organization's core capabilities, the critical elements needed to achieve a goal and how these capabilities can be affected by a disruption. Whether that means developing redundancies, cross-training employees to accomplish other duties or organizing business practices for action, every organization stands to benefit from developing culture of resilience.