Zoning for Flood Resilience Workshop

RETI Center - Building Resilience 2017

Location: RETI (Realty Collective) Center - 351 Van Brunt Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn
Date: Saturday June 17th from 2:30pm – 4:00pm

List of DCP Staff

Zoning: Nilus Klingel/Manuela Powidayko/Joy Resor/Annazizi Too, Urban Design Division: Thaddeus Pawlowski/Marwah Garib, Waterfront and Open Space: Mary Kimball/Ben Palevsky/Casey Peterson, Staten Island Office: George Todorovic/Olivia Sullivan, Brooklyn Office: Catherine Ferrara.

RETI Center Contact Information

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List of Attendees

Joel Mejia, Martha Wilson, Klaar De Schepper, Nathan Weiser, Jim Shelton, Lisa Lynch, Sonya Guimon, Sheryl Braxton, Sarah N. Phillips, John, Jill Cornell.

Workshop Description

Summary

The Department of City Planning hosted an informational meeting and workshop about floodplain design and development. Following a short presentation on zoning rules that were adopted after Hurricane Sandy to facilitate resilient buildings, participants had the opportunity to share their ideas on how to shape a future update to these rules to advance resiliency in Red Hook and across the city.

Goals

1. Educate the public about zoning for flood resilience;
2. Learn about resilience strategies in Red Hook buildings;
3. Establish urban design priorities for Red Hook and other coastal neighborhoods;
4. Collect feedback on how zoning can help achieve building-scale resiliency.

Summary of Main Takeaways

- Zoning for flood resilience
    - Concerns about people being able to exit elevated/dry-floodproofed buildings in the case of emergencies (all ADA requirements from Building Code are still applicable);
    - Sometimes better to lose floor space in order to increase resiliency (some homeowners were faced with that decision);
    - Difficult to retrofit houses that are connected (most of the neighborhood have attached buildings);
    - Wood frame buildings are hard to retrofit-how they can be wet-floodproofed? Concerns that this type of building stock would mostly be knocked down and built new (lighter construction can be elevated, but if attached, it faces more challenges);
    - Concerns with the vulnerability of basements;
    - Concerns with thickness/cost of aquarium glass;
    - Commercial ground floors and art galleries can hardly accommodate Building Code requirements due to cost and because they are attached and are mostly built to the lot line;
    - Many of the workshop retrofit examples that participants built couldn't recoup space in when retrofitted (due to current zoning height restrictions);
    - Address storm water management in the building scale - where does flood water go? DCP should explore system of natural berms and swales in the building scale as well.
    - Resilience should also be seen as independence, therefore zoning should allow and incentivize energy production such as by adding solar panels on roofs;

- Resilience strategies in Red Hook buildings
    - Concerns with the deteriorating housing stock, and how that could increase issues such as bad smell or contamination after a flooding event (not necessarily a zoning issue);
    - Red Hook is still dealing with recovery from Sandy;
    - Part of Coffey Street (west of Van Brunt Street) is known as "Red Hook Heights" because it is the high point that didn't get flooded;
    - Concerns with resiliency and how it interacts with affordability. Perhaps funding should start at commercial corridors. In addition, there are concerns with gentrification;
    - Block-scale flood proofing methods should be considered;
    - Raising sidewalks may be a good idea, but then the concern would be with the sunken front yards;
    - There should be an option to dry flood-proof your home and keep your basement.
    - City should coordinate with BQX proposal to add streetscape resiliency measures (i.e. street raisings, community flood protection measures).

- Urban design priorities for Red Hook and other coastal neighborhoods
    - Concern with aesthetics of buildings in the flood zone starting to look like San Francisco (open foundations, garage doors);
    - New residential buildings at Sullivan Street (http://aastudio.com/king-sullivan-townhomes, prior manufacturing building) doesn't appear to have street drainage and have ground floor parking with a lot of curb cuts (those garage doors are not for parking, but the space seems to be designed to be used for storage since it is wet-floodproofed, and the curb cut is grandfathered from the previous Manufacturing bldg., that is why it is so long);
    - People generally didn't like the Duracell building up on pilotis.

- Notes about the workshop table exercise
    - In regards the building pieces, Klaartje asked if this is how we plan in the office – she thought the exercise was great!