Resilient Connecticut Workshop Summary

May 22, 2019
Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation

University of Connecticut, Stamford Campus
Stamford, Connecticut

Funding was provided by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development through the Community Block Grant National Disaster Recovery Program, as administered by the State of Connecticut, Department of Housing.
Project Overview

The Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) hosted an event on May 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019 with invited participants to: (1) engage with state, regional and local government agencies around a new federally funded project called “Resilient Connecticut;” (2) explore case studies on resilience planning across scales that will inform Resilient Connecticut; (3) and gather feedback on the priorities for a draft Resilience Planning Framework (Resilient Connecticut - Phase One) including planning considerations, technical analysis, capacity development, funding and policy considerations.

Resilient Connecticut is a multi-scale climate adaptation planning and implementation program focusing on linking technical analysis to effective planning and implementation strategies and communicating these approaches through robust engagement strategies. The regional to site scale projects will focus on the Superstorm Sandy impacted regions of New Haven and Fairfield Counties. The program will generate technically informed regional resilience and adaptation plans with specific implementable site scale proposals, as well as funding mechanisms, policy considerations, and actionable priorities. Extensive technical assessment using modeling, field research and data analysis to inform regional risk assessments and planning scenario options will inform the regional initiatives and site scale pilot projects.

Working in coordination with state agencies, regional councils of governments (COGs) and municipalities, CIRCA initiated Resilient Connecticut in June 2018. The program builds on CIRCA’s ongoing work across the state linking technical analysis to relevant municipal, regional and state level challenges. For Resilient Connecticut, CIRCA and UConn worked with the State of Connecticut to submit a proposal to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). The contract was awarded in June 2017 for the project, Development of the Connecticut Connections Coastal Resilience Plan (now titled Resilient Connecticut) to be administered through the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH).

Resilient Connecticut’s guiding principle is to establish resilient communities through smart planning that incorporates economic development framed around resilient transit-oriented development, conservation strategies, and critical infrastructure improvements.

Project Phases

\textit{Phase I} of the project (Fall 2018 to Fall 2019) includes a comprehensive inventory and assessment of previous and ongoing resilience and adaptation efforts both here in Connecticut, as well as around the country and internationally. This research, along with consultation from the State Agencies Fostering Resilience (SAFR) and extensive stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of a Resilience Planning Framework. Work will involve a focus on neighborhood, town, and regional scales and will consider the vulnerability of all infrastructure systems with the goal of developing multi-scale strategies for resilience.

\textit{Phase II} of the project (Fall 2019 to Fall 2020) will include a combination of regional and municipal scale planning activities as well as regional engagement and coordination across planning initiatives. During the Phase II process, a suite of projects with regional impact and significance will be identified and prioritized for site plan development in Phase III.
Phase III (Winter 2021 to Spring 2022) of the project will include site and implementation plan development, funding strategies, and a synthesis report that will document all project activities along with recommendations for a Connecticut Statewide Resilience Roadmap.

Workshop Overview

Workshops and engagement are critical components of the project development and engagement. The May 22nd workshop provided an opportunity to share the vision for the project and to review and gather feedback on the Phase I development of the Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework. The workshop targeted a mix of municipal staff, state agency staff, nonprofit organizations, and consultants. Invitations went to over 170 people and approximately 60 people attended (Appendix A). The workshop included three sessions (Appendix A):

- Session A: state and regional scale resilience planning
- Session B: municipal scale issues and coastal resilience plans, challenges, and barriers through case studies from Fairfield and New Haven Counties
- Session C: round table discussion for input and feedback on the Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework

During Session C we organized a series of presentations and break out discussions focusing on the Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework. These included presentations and roundtable discussions on:

- The scientific and technical elements of the Framework
- Adaptation options and the translation of technical information to planning
Prioritizing projects and funding

In addition, participants were invited throughout the day to view posters on the following topics:

- Resilient Connecticut Overview
- Coastal Vulnerability Assessment - Methodology for Connecticut Sea Level Rise (CIRCA)
- Changes in Sea Level at the Connecticut Shoreline (CIRCA)
- Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Planning for Protection of Public Drinking Water: Private Well Assessment and Recommendations (DPH/MMI/CIRCA)
- Assessing Impacts of Tides and Precipitation on Downtown Storm Sewer System Through Use of Real-Time Depth and Flow Monitoring (New Haven)
- Design and Technical Guide for Implementing Innovative Municipal Scale Coastal Resilience in Southern Connecticut (SCRCOG)
- Regional Community Rating System Program (WCOG)

Speaker's slides, posters, and a video of Sessions A and B are available on the Resilient Connecticut website:

https://resilientconnecticut.uconn.edu/2019/05/24/products-available-may-22-resilient-connecticut-workshop/

Session A Overview: state and regional scale resilience planning

Session A included the following speakers and topics:

- Welcome and goals of the workshop - Jim O’Donnell, Executive Director, CIRCA
- Welcome from DOH and overview of related Bridgeport NDR pilot project
  Shanté Hanks, Deputy Commissioner and Rebecca French, Director of Resilience, Connecticut Department of Housing
- State agency resilience priorities and challenges - David Kooris, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Resilient Connecticut overview - John Truscinski, Director of Resilience Planning, CIRCA
- Highlighting needs for a regional approach - Matt Fulda, Executive Director, MetroCOG

This first session was moderated by Alex Felson, CIRCA’s Director of Resilience Design who spoke about the need to translate technical information and planning at a municipal level while also highlighting the need for collaboration and state and regional resilience planning. The program started with an introduction and welcome by CIRCA’s Executive Director and UConn Marine Sciences faculty Jim O’Donnell. He introduced Shanté Hanks, Deputy Commissioner for the CT Department of Housing who also provided a warm welcome before introducing her Director of Resilience, Rebecca French. Ms. French provided a brief overview of a related NDR funded resilience pilot project in the City of Bridgeport that is addressing climate risks, chronic stormwater flooding, dry egress, and a plan for highly vulnerable neighborhoods, including areas with public housing. Dr. Felson then introduced David Kooris, Deputy Commissioner at the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development who spoke about the need to integrate resilience planning at state, regional, and local scales while thinking about implications of past investments and how they impact development practices in the future. John
Truscinski, CIRCA’s Director of Resilience Planning then gave an overview of the Resilient Connecticut project and framed discussion for the workshop’s afternoon session. The final speaker was Matt Fulda, Executive Director of Metropolitan Council of Governments, who highlighted the importance of partnerships for resilience planning with COGs in New Haven and Fairfield Counties, especially related to transportation, regional hazard mitigation plans, and FEMA’s Community Rating System.

Session B Overview: municipal scale issues and coastal resilience plans, challenges, and barriers

Session B included the following speakers and topics:

- New Haven County case study: City of New Haven response to climate impacts - Aicha Woods, Assistant Director of Comprehensive Planning & Giovanni Zinn, City Engineer, New Haven
- Fairfield County case study: Town of Stratford Coastal Resilience Planning - Susmitha Attota, AICP, Town Planner and Jay Habansky, AICP, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Stratford
- Road flooding and cross jurisdictional issues - Janice Plaziak, Town Engineer, Guilford
- SCRCOG case studies: Regional Framework for Coastal Resilience and regional drinking water study - Eugene Livshits, Senior Regional Planner and Rebecca Andreucci, Regional Planner, South Central Regional Council of Governments

This second session was moderating by Katie Lund, CIRCA’s Director of Engagement who introduced a series of case study speakers from New Haven and Fairfield Counties. New Haven’s Director of City Planning Aicha Woods and City Engineer Giovanni Zinn gave a team presentation focusing on New Haven’s multi-faceted approach to their Long Wharf living shoreline project and its planning goals and challenges related to flood risk reduction including temporary flood barriers, bioswales, and other forms of stormwater reduction. The second presentation was given by Jay Habansky, Stratford’s Planning and Zoning Administrator and Susmitha Attota, Town Planner who gave an overview of Stratford’s resilience planning effort and the town’s risk-based decision making for flooding, sea level rise, and resiliency. The next presentation was given by Janice Plaziak, Guilford’s Town Engineer who provided an overview of regional road flooding issues on a state highway, Rte. 146 and some of the cross jurisdictional issues, the need for corridor planning, having CT DOT involved in planning, providing alternative access to neighborhoods, and preserving the historic character of this scenic roadway. The final speakers included Eugene Livshits, Senior Regional Planner and Rebecca Andreucci, Regional Planner at the South Central Regional Council of Governments who spoke about the Regional Framework for Coastal Resilience and a regional drinking water study for protection of public drinking water as conducted in partnership with the Regional Water Authority and UConn faculty.

Session C Overview: round table discussions on the Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework

A primary objective of the workshop was to provide a forum and opportunity for input from a broad audience of stakeholders with expertise on resilience planning in Connecticut to inform the drafting of a “Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework.” The Framework is a key deliverable of Phase 1 that will provide guidance to the planning process for Resilient Connecticut during Phases 2 and 3. Prior to the workshop, the CIRCA team began drafting elements of the Framework for presentation and feedback during the May 22nd event. Session C was dedicated to presentations and discussion of these draft
Framework elements. The format of the session consisted of short presentations by CIRCA staff followed by round table discussions with facilitators and note takers. Facilitators were given a list of questions to initiate and guide the discussion between participants. Notes from each session were then reviewed to identify emerging and overlapping themes, issues, and takeaways from the conversation.

**Presentation and Round table Discussion 1:**
**Scientific and technical elements of the Framework**
Yaprak Onat, CIRCA’s Director of Research presented on CIRCA’s coastal vulnerability index and flood risk assessment, technical tools, data, and modeling methodologies that will enable risk assessments during the Resilient Connecticut planning process in Phases 2 and 3. The following questions were provided to facilitators to initiate discussion:

1. *Based on the presentation you just heard, what additional tools would be helpful for climate change planning (e.g. map viewers, modeling, field measurements)?*

2. *What are some challenges to incorporating technical information and data into existing planning documents?*

3. *How would you use a tool like the vulnerability index that was just presented in your planning and decision making?*

4. *What regional vulnerabilities would benefit from further study (e.g. transportation, wastewater treatment, drinking water, energy grid)?*

**Key takeaways from the roundtable discussion included:**

- CT needs baseline information and a common methodology that all towns and agencies can use. To date much of the data and maps that have been used vary between groups and planners that have been working with towns to address climate change risks.
- More information and better maps of culverts, catch basins, treatment plants and storm water modeling would be useful in better assessing flood risk. Also maps of vulnerable roads that run north/south and provide egress routes and connections to routes 1, 95, and 15 are needed along the coast in Connecticut.
- Local knowledge can be an important input to the vulnerability assessment and shouldn’t be discounted.
- Focus on transferable projects and solutions. Some participants expressed reservations about using the Bridgeport south end project as a demonstration for other communities since most towns will not be able to afford large berms and flood walls.
- Downscaled modeling at the site or neighborhood scale is needed to move projects forward.
- Many participants emphasized the need for technical training on how to use tools. We can produce the best maps and data but their impact will be limited if people lack knowledge in how to use them. This includes municipal staff who often lack time or capacity to incorporate new tools into decision making. Tools are also a means to an end.
• There was a common theme around the need for public communication on these issues. Many towns feel they can’t talk to the public about what climate change and sea-level rise imply for their communities either because they lack scientific credibility or they are too close to local political dynamics. There’s a need for a perceived neutral scientifically credible authority to provide guidance to the public, which can enable local decision-making. Clear communication of the risks and the creation of partnerships are both critical.
• Paradigm shifts are needed around how to rebuild or respond post storm. The notion of repairing or building back to the way it was requires a shift. Mindsets can lead to paralysis.
• There are plans that exist already. Some of this planning work is too general. Gaps remain between the preliminary planning materials and implementation. In certain instances, extra data or technical information would push projects further.
• Operations and management need to be part of the planning process.
• Better allocation of resources and estimates of benefit to cost ratios will be useful for informing projects.
• CIRCA needs to explain more clearly how we’re moving between regional scale planning and site scale planning. Perhaps create a story or show why this is needed based on a case study example.

Presentation and Round table Discussion 2:
Adaptation options and the translation of technical information to planning

Alex Felson presented on key planning concepts from the Resilient Connecticut NDRC proposal such as Resilient Corridors, Zones of Shared Risk, and Resilient Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The following questions were provided to facilitators to initiate discussion:

1. What scales do you feel have been adequately addressed through other planning processes (e.g. site, neighborhood, municipal, regional, state)? What scales need additional resilience planning to make further progress?

2. How can the concepts of “zones of shared risk” and “resilience corridors” that were just presented be used to encourage regional planning? What are some challenges with applying these concepts?

3. What are ways that towns are already cooperating to plan for climate change impacts?

4. What are some additional ways that communities can engage in cross jurisdictional planning to move towards solving common issues and problems?

Key takeaways from the roundtable discussion included:

• Regional Councils of Government (COGS) are an important resource and factor that are already working across multiple jurisdictions to encourage regional planning. It’s important to get them involved and they need resources to participate.
• Think about partnering with other regional organizations that already work at a regional scale such as conservation districts, land trusts, health districts, congressional districts, etc.
• We need to get Planning and Zoning Commissions interested in the concepts of resilience corridors and zones of shared risk.
• Emergency management works at a regional level currently under DEMHS and can be a good way to get towns to the table. This is currently done through the FEMA hazard mitigation planning process.
• Consultants also already work across multiple towns and scales and can be a key resource in providing these concepts to towns.
• “Incentives” for town participation came up often in the discussion. Sustainable CT was mentioned as a model for providing incentives to towns to work with each other. Perhaps we can partner with them through this project or think of other incentives that would encourage the type of regional process we’re proposing.
• “Mini-regional” projects that include 3-4 towns in a single watershed could be used to demonstrate a cross municipal collaboration around vulnerability assessment and project identification, again emphasizing the need to communicate how the benefits of a site scale project link back to regional benefits and goals so towns will participate.
• “Opportunity Zones” was mentioned as a parallel concept that we can work with. DECD is encouraging this idea for underutilized lands with less attractive real estate that create a tax system to encourage development.
• Focusing on financing industry and addressing insurance issues is paramount.
• Discussed the potential for a public levy similar to a tax associated with sidewalks or other shared assets such as sewers and stormwater. This approach could be used to generate income to support shared resiliency measures.
• Local knowledge was again mentioned as an important supplement to the concepts of resilience corridors and zones of shared risk.

Presentation and Round table Discussion 3:
Prioritizing projects and funding
John Trusinski presented on the challenges of prioritizing projects among competing stakeholder interests, as well as different decision support models that can be incorporated into the Resilient Connecticut planning process. Various cost-benefit methodologies were presented as well as framing questions about how towns and regions can be equitable and transparent in prioritizing resilience investments. The following questions were provided to facilitators to initiate discussion:

1. How can towns and regions balance competing goals and interests among stakeholders when prioritizing resilience investments?

2. How are communities currently prioritizing resilience projects and investments?
   • What are the benefits and challenges to how it’s currently being done?
   • What are some examples of a successful approach to prioritization?
3. Beyond funding, what are the most important factors in making decisions about how to prioritize resilience projects and investments?
   - Good technical information and data?
   - Inclusive stakeholder process? Or political support?
   - Other?

4. What are some outcomes you’d like to see from this Resilient Connecticut project?

Key takeaways from the roundtable discussion included:

- Currently no one is using a common methodology for prioritizing projects. If we were able to create a replicable decision support/cost-benefit model it could help towns to prioritize and would be helpful for the state moving forward.
- Related to the comment above, private benefits of projects need to be better understood to address equity and where funding should come from.
- In Connecticut there’s a tension between larger urban areas and smaller coastal and inland towns in terms of how resilience funding has been allocated so far. Many towns feel that Bridgeport and New Haven have gotten all the attention on this issue and there’s a feeling that smaller towns have been left on their own.
- Many towns don’t have knowledge about where funding for projects is available nor capacity for grant writing to fund projects. There’s a need for someone to assist in simplifying the funding and permitting processes for projects.
- There is a sense that towns have burnout on planning. Many expressed a hope that something solid based around actual implementation of projects will result from Resilient Connecticut and not just another planning exercise. We should also be judicious with people’s time as a result.
- We should build on all the previous planning work that has been done and not repeat it (see comment above). Perhaps we could develop a cost/benefit decision support model that we apply to projects that have already been identified through previous planning and move those projects forward towards implementation.
- Look to create a shared benefit feature such as recreational benefits. Perhaps do a reverse auction survey (e.g. how much are you willing to pay), to determine peoples’ willingness to pay and to assess public benefits versus avoided risks.
- Develop regional competitiveness, where towns evaluate their actions compared to one another. This also provides something solid to point to and can create more incentives to take risks.
- Fill the gap between planning and implementation. Consider alternatives to the constraints the permitting agencies are placing on land use change. Consider regulatory innovations (e.g. using the wetland mitigation banking as a tool for coastal adaptation).

Survey Methods and Outcomes

A survey was developed and administered using a multi-modal approach. Prior to the survey distribution, University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board approved this study (X19-079) under the exempt classification category. Survey questions appeared as multiple choice, Likert scale matrices, and open-ended text. Two modes were used to distribute the questionnaires. Paper copies of the survey were
distributed at the May 22 event, with sixteen individual responses. The survey was sent digitally to the entire list of workshop attendees, following the event, yielding an additional nine responses. In total 25 surveys were collected from the list of 56 participants resulting in a 45% response rate. Data were entered, cleaned, and analyzed using Qualtrics data analysis features. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation tests were performed on quantitative variables. Qualitative data were coded using a two-phase inductive coding scheme. Results of these analyses are as follows.

- 25 stakeholders responded to the survey and the majority of respondents were from state and local governments.

- Survey participants ranked public health and safety, infrastructure damage, and flooding of roadways as highest priorities, though several other resilience topics were deemed to be of high or medium priority.

- The vast majority of participants agreed that their organization understands the likelihood of extreme storm and nuisance flooding events, yet the majority of participants indicated that their organization does not have the resources needed to increase regional resilience.

- State agency professionals, municipal officials, and Council of Government participants indicated a desire to work more closely with each other. There is also an indication that these groups would like to work more closely with engineering firms, business owners, and academic institutions.

- Participants indicated wanting to learn about a variety of topics. They are especially interested in the topics of communicating resilience and resilience grant funding.

- Participants asserted that funding, increased collaboration/coordination, and increased public engagement are needed to help build regional resilience, and yet these factors continue to pose significant barriers to building regional resilience.

- In the end, increased coordination was found to be the most cited way to overcome perceived regional resilience planning barriers.

**Next Steps**

Based on the findings from the Resilient Connecticut Workshop, along with research and inventorying of previous resilience plans in CT and elsewhere, the CIRCA team is completing a final draft of the Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework. The Framework will inform the development of an RFP to solicit proposals from contractors that will partner with CIRCA, Regional Councils of Governments, State Agencies, and Municipalities during Phases II and III of the Resilient Connecticut Project. The CIRCA team expects to release the RFP in the Fall of 2019 and present on the final Resilient Connecticut Planning Framework at the first Annual Summit, to be held in November 2019.
Appendix A – Participant List & Workshop Agenda
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<th>First name</th>
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<th>Organization</th>
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Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation

Resilient Connecticut Workshop:
Developing A Planning Framework for New Haven and Fairfield Counties

May 22, 2019
8:30 - 3:00
UConn Stamford, Auditorium
1 University Place, Stamford

Participants will:
1. Learn about the new Resilient Connecticut project
2. Hear case studies on resilience planning at different scales
3. Provide input on priorities for funding, planning, capacity development, and research for the Resilient Connecticut project

AGENDA

8:30  Registration (coffee provided)

9:00-10:30  Session A: State and regional scale resilience planning  
Moderated by Alex Felson, Director of Resilience Design, CIRCA

9:00 - 9:10  Welcome and goals of the workshop - Jim O’Donnell, Executive Director, CIRCA

9:10 - 9:25  Welcome from DOH and overview of related Bridgeport NDR pilot project - 
Shanté Hanks, Deputy Commissioner and Rebecca French, Director of Resilience, Connecticut Department of Housing

9:25 - 9:40  State agency resilience priorities and challenges - David Kooris, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

9:40 - 9:55  Resilient Connecticut overview - John Truscinski, Director of Resilience Planning, CIRCA

9:55 - 10:10  Highlighting needs for a regional approach - Matt Fulda, Executive Director, MetroCOG

10:10 - 10:30  Facilitated group discussion

10:30 – 10:45  Break (coffee provided) and time for poster viewing
10:45 – 12:15  **Session B: Municipal scale issues and coastal resilience plans, challenges, and barriers**  
*Moderated by Katie Lund, Director of Engagement, CIRCA*

10:45 – 11:00  New Haven County case study: City of New Haven response to climate impacts - Aicha Woods, Assistant Director of Comprehensive Planning & Giovanni Zinn, City Engineer, New Haven

11:00 – 11:15  Fairfield County case study: Town of Stratford Coastal Resilience Planning - Susmitha Attota, AICP, Town Planner and Jay Habansky, AICP, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Stratford

11:15 – 11:30  Road flooding and cross jurisdictional issues - Janice Plaziak, Town Engineer, Guilford

11:30 – 11:45  SCRCOG case studies: Regional Framework for Coastal Resilience and regional drinking water study - Eugene Livshits, Senior Regional Planner and Rebecca Andreucci, Regional Planner, South Central Regional Council of Governments

11:45 – 12:15  Panel Q & A and introduction to polling session

12:15 – 1:00  **Lunch (provided)** with interactive polling session and welcome from Terrence Cheng, Stamford Campus Director and Professor of English

1:00 – 2:45  **Session C: Breakout Sessions – Auditorium**  
*Moderated by Miriah Kelly, Assistant Extension Educator, UConn*  
Short CIRCA presentations will be followed by facilitated round table discussion

2:45 – 3:00  **Closing Remarks and Next Steps**

**POSTERS:**
Participants are invited throughout the day to view posters on the following topics:

- Resilient Connecticut Overview
- Coastal Vulnerability Assessment - Methodology for Connecticut Sea Level Rise (CIRCA)
- Changes in Sea Level at the Connecticut Shoreline (CIRCA)
- Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Planning for Protection of Public Drinking Water: Private Well Assessment and Recommendations (DPH/MMI/CIRCA)
- Assessing Impacts of Tides and Precipitation on Downtown Storm Sewer System Through Use of Real-Time Depth and Flow Monitoring (New Haven)
- Design and Technical Guide for Implementing Innovative Municipal Scale Coastal Resilience in Southern Connecticut (SCRCOG)
- Regional Community Rating System Program (WCOG)

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