



Dear Council Member,

**Re: Support the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCR).**

Climate change is not a nebulous future threat. It landed on our shores violently and mercilessly seven years ago as Superstorm Sandy. Its impact hit home to many then, and continues to be seen and felt all around us. New York City and New York State have made great strides this year passing bills designed to address the root cause of climate change--greenhouse gas emissions--but in a city with 520 miles of coastline, there is much more to be done to protect people and communities from current and future impacts.

Several years ago, in the aftermath of Sandy, the Stuyvesant Town, Lower East Side and East Village communities came together to advocate for protective measures to fortify their waterfront and their residents from the threats of climate change. They formed partnerships with designers and architects, and submitted a winning proposal to the Rebuild by Design competition. Despite laudable efforts, however, construction on the project has not yet begun.

The ESCR project is one of the first of many projects needed to protect waterfront communities in all five boroughs, so it is imperative we get this right, both the process and the product.

Last year, usurping five years of community-driven planning, the Administration advanced a much different plan for the stretch of the East River waterfront between 25th Street and Montgomery Street. This blindsided many in the community and heightened tensions around this critical project that in some ways still remain today. Council Member Rivera and Borough President Brewer stepped up in the aftermath of this turnabout to ensure their constituents were heard, including using their own budgets to hire a third party review of the new plan. NYLCV commends both for the leadership they showed on behalf of the community throughout this process.

As we reflect on the anniversary of Sandy, we must move forward with this project. Despite the imperfect process, the ESCR project is now in a much stronger place. The City has held more than 40 meetings in this community so far this year--with Community Based Organizations, tenant associations, NYCHA residents, and community boards.



Notable improvements to the ESCR plan include:

- Reduced need for overnight construction along much of the project area, which includes NYCHA developments.
- A phased construction schedule that allows nearly half of East River Park to remain open at all times during the build-out process, with additional staggering of construction in Project Area 2.
- Sewage and transportation improvements, including greater differentiation between cyclist and pedestrian pathways.
- Ongoing air quality monitoring during construction.
- Ensuring safe soil quality.
- Stronger mitigation measures in place for dust, noise, and vibration.
- Nearly 1,000 new trees to be planted in the community in addition to the over 1,800 trees planned for East River Park.

Based on these improvements, NYLCV supports the advancement of the ESCR project and urges you to support it as well. We also respectfully request the clarification on the following remaining questions:

- Analysis of need for any interim flood protection measures
- Follow through on the funding and facilitation of a community advisory group
- Clarification of scope for a study to repurpose or green FDR Drive

Park and waterfront access is important to both the social and physical environment, and we believe the current ESCR plan adequately balances this need with the urgency of protecting this vulnerable community.

This is still the beginning of the long term challenge of building a resilient city capable of weathering rising seas and the next big storm. This project can set the precedent for future coastal resiliency projects citywide. Therefore we must learn from this process and do better next time to balance policy, community needs and engagement, and the urgency of the climate crisis.

We must move forward to get community-led resiliency projects off the ground in other vulnerable waterfront communities, and it starts with advancement of the ESCR project. We look forward to seeing it move through the Land Use Committee and urge support for the project from the full City Council at the next Stated Meeting.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Julie Tighe'.

Julie Tighe, President