

APPENDIX A

Phase II Engagement Report

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1. Goals and Objectives for Phase II Engagement

Task 2 of the Resilient Connecticut Phase II consultant services is entitled “Organize and Run a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Process.” This task was designed with the intention of developing and executing a robust stakeholder engagement process which would include workshops, webinars, regular Council of Government (COG) board and committee meetings, and online tools and resources.

Each of the individual engagement opportunities had different goals and objectives, however, overall engagement efforts were designed to ensure community awareness, and to gather input and support from stakeholders, COGs, and the public. It is worth noting that the public, while not the primary target of the engagement efforts, was able to participate in all events and attend the COG meetings.

The online tools developed include a Phase II ArcGIS Online Story Map, interactive maps, and viewer tools. These resources were designed to present the project to users to understand Resilient Connecticut as a whole, and to follow the development of Phase II. The Story Map includes project information, interactive maps with background information and data, and additional links to resources on CIRCA, climate change, and the COGs.

Both workshops had specific goals; the first was to collect feedback on the climate change vulnerability index (CCVI), Zones of Shared Risk (ZSR), and the ground truth preliminary results, the second to introduce the resilience opportunity areas (ROARs) and to collect feedback on the methodology used. The two sets of workshops were designed to include presentations on the topics, polling with specific questions, and breakout sessions that allowed participants time to ask questions and provide input.

The webinars, in contrast to the lengthy workshops, were short and concise events that aimed to keep stakeholders engaged and informed on the process and milestones. The first hour long webinar was to deliver updates on the CCVI development, and the second half-hour webinar presented the vulnerability assessment report. These two events were designed for continued engagement and awareness of Phase II.

In addition to the specific events and tools, the Resilient Connecticut team works to attend as many COG board and committee meetings as possible during the Phase II process. The goal was to continue to engage those communities in Fairfield and New Haven Counties; particularly those with higher socially vulnerable populations.

2. Online Story Map and Viewers

At the beginning of Phase II, a StoryMap was developed to introduce the planning process, the tools being developed, and to act as a platform for information relating to the project. This StoryMap specifically included and introduction Resilient Connecticut, the purpose and need for the project, detailed information on understanding climate vulnerability, and a section where input could be provided on several topics.

The StoryMap presents flood, heat, and wind as the three primary climate stressors of focus; while wind was not carried on through the remainder of Phase II, it was important to introduce as windstorms are a major challenge in the state. Visitors could explore stressor specific data sets on interactive maps or review additional materials on climate related projects and studies. Visitors could also explore the CCVI, ZSR tool, and the social vulnerability index (SVI) mapping.

The StoryMap also reviews resilience efforts including previous planning and design studies, resilience and mitigation actions, and the ROAR methodology. Introducing the previous and current resilience planning efforts outlines the ongoing effort and need for continued resilience planning and implementation in the region, and throughout the state.

Since collecting feedback is such an integral component of Resilient Connecticut, the StoryMap also allowed visitors to provide input on three topics:

1. The CCVI and ZSR tools: Participants could explore the tools and provide feedback and thoughts on the tools, data used, and overall tool usefulness.
2. Identify vulnerable or at-risk areas: Here visitors could help highlight those areas that are a major concern regarding heat, flood, or wind.
3. What would you like to see in your community: Seeing as Phase II will ultimately lead to Phase III and resilience projects, it is important to understand what communities want to see, and what they need, in their community by way of resilience and adaptation.

The StoryMap and content was maintained and updated throughout the Phase II process. As the tools progressed, the vulnerability assessment concluded, and the ROARs were identified, the StoryMap and tools evolved to ensure that visitors had the most up-to-date information and data.

While no responses were collected from the polls located within the input section, these were deployed and available throughout the entire Phase II process.

2.1 Vulnerability Tool Viewers

An additional StoryMap was developed to specifically house and introduce the CCVI, ZSR, and SVI maps. Here users could learn how to use the tools and explore the various functions.

The CCVI and SVI were each developed into their own viewer tool. The CCVI, which included one for heat and one for flood, and the SVI, included interactive maps with additional, advanced features. The chart function, found in all three tools, allows users to explore the data for specific regions, and provides statistics for user defined areas. Users can also filter the maps based on user defined criteria, print a map, or develop infographics based on community boundaries.

The inclusion of these tools provides accessible, usable data, and raises stakeholder and user awareness both of the project, and climate change vulnerability.

The ZSR interactive map does not contain the same functions as above due to this being a qualitative tool. However, users are still able to explore the map, identify the zones and their classification, and explore the various types of assets and infrastructure throughout the region in relation to the ZSR.

3. Stakeholder Workshops

Two workshop series were developed for Phase II. Each series consisted of four workshops, one targeted toward each COG, for a total of eight workshops. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all workshops were held virtually via Zoom.

The workshops were publicized widely, which resulted in considerable registrations. Publicity included:

- Inclusion in the CIRCA monthly *Resilience Roundup* newsletter. This email reaches an estimate 1,115 email addresses representing a variety of stakeholders.
- COG Email distribution. A workshop flyer including registration information was developed for each of the COGs and was distributed to committee members. Members include chief elected officials (CEOs), municipal staff, and municipal board and commission members.

- COG social media. All four COGs have either social media or an “announcement” platform that is utilized to publicize events. Each of the COGs released the workshop information on either Facebook, Twitter, or their website; these postings reach both the COG members and the public.
- COG board and committee meetings. As part of the monthly COG committee meetings, a Resilient Connecticut team member presented on the workshop during registration periods to advertise the event. These meetings are also open to the public.

The workshop flyer and registration materials were translated to Spanish by CIRCA. CIRCA distributed the translated flyer on the CIRCA Facebook page and on the workshop website. The translated flyer was also circulated to the COGs for distribution.

3.1 COG Workshop #1: *Vulnerability Assessment and Regional Zones of Shared Risk*

In January and February of 2021, the first series of workshops, four in total with one for each COG, had a total of 131 registrants from municipalities, land trusts, non-profit organizations, state offices, and private entities.

Pre-workshop engagement and materials were developed and sent to registrants several days before the workshops. These materials, found in Appendix A of the first workshop report, included facts sheets on the CCVI and ZSR tools, a survey, and a link to the CCVI and ZSR viewers for registrants to explore. These materials were intended to both provide a foundational understanding of the tools that were going to be discussed, and to collect preliminary feedback.

Individuals participated in a two-and half-hour virtual workshop that was divided into two sections. The first included an introduction, followed by a presentation on the CCVI and then a CCVI breakout session specific to flood. The second half included a presentation on ZSR, and a second breakout focused on ZSR.

Participants provided critical feedback including ways to make each tool more functional or user-friendly, suggestions on data types that could be incorporated into the CCVI and help towards ground-truthing accuracy in vulnerability depictions. Overall, the workshops generated stimulating conversations on how these vulnerability assessment tools may be useful and where they could be applicable in the future.

The feedback made specifically for the CCVI covered a broad range of topics, from how it can be used as planning tool, as a component of Resilient Connecticut, location-specific feedback, and as mentioned above, general input. Many of the comments

- Identify any regional assets or infrastructure that may have been absent from the analysis, and
- Define criteria for asset and opportunity area prioritization.

Registrants participated in a two-hour virtual workshop which was broken into two segments. The first segment focused on the methodology for identifying resilience opportunity areas (ROARs) and an introduction to the sheets used to depict the areas identified to date. Attendees were then divided into breakout groups where ROARs and the methodology were discussed further. The second segment focused on the next steps of the ROAR process and allowed ample time for group discussion.

Breakout groups provided an opportunity for stakeholders to give feedback and opinions on the ROARs identified, vulnerabilities present specific to a certain area, and on the process as a whole. Many participants reaffirmed the regional assets used as identification, identified new, and provided useful and specific insight into the climate change challenges some ROARs face.

During breakouts participants were asked to provide their thoughts and input on a variety of topics including what assets and infrastructure they viewed as regional, what are some current or future planning or development efforts the team should be aware of, and what are some key characteristics of a “resilience opportunity area”.

Responses highlighted key community assets such as economic stimulators that may have not been considered initially in the ROAR analysis and reiterated the importance of others that had been identified. Several planning efforts throughout the region were discussed whether they were community specific, or general ongoing efforts by the state. Participants noted specific and general community assets that they felt either needed resilience attention or proved to be a community strength and contributed to resilience. Finally, questions were raised regarding additional ROAR identification outside of the initial transit-oriented development areas identified.

In all, the outcomes of the workshop were to consider additional ROARs, explore the need for additional and focused stakeholder conversations surrounding certain identified ROARs, long-term efforts should consider smaller-scale projects, and that in general this identification process will continue to raise awareness surrounding these vulnerable areas.

4. Webinars

Two webinars were developed and designed to update stakeholders on planning progress, to keep them engaged in the process, and to present milestone information.

Both events were publicized like the workshops. Webinar information and registration was distributed in the Resilience Roundup, through COG email distribution, and during COG board and committee meetings.

The first webinar, *“Climate Change Vulnerability Index Webinar: Progress and New Results for Heat and Wind”*, was held in March 2021 following the first series of workshops. With the feedback incorporated into the flood CCVI, the Resilient Connecticut team wanted to use the webinar to present flood tool upgrades, and to provide updates on both the heat and wind CCVIs. The hour-long webinar provided a brief overview of the tool mechanics, a detailed look at the CCVI viewer and information stored in the tool, and an introduction to evaluating combined heat and flood vulnerability using the CCVI.

This webinar was developed with two objectives: first, to keep the audience engaged in the planning process; and second, to present the many changes that were a direct result of the first workshop series.

While the webinar setting does not typically allow for ample question and answer dialogue, participants were encouraged to visit the Resilient Connecticut StoryMap where they could continue to explore the tools and provide input via one of the surveys.

The second webinar, *“From Regional Vulnerability to Resilience Opportunities Draft Report Release Webinar”*, was held in October 2021. Attendees participated in a half-hour webinar which presented the draft vulnerability assessment report and high-level findings. The presentation reviewed the executive summary and report chapters, introduced specific graphics, and explained the layout of the ROAR informational sheets.

By attending this webinar, those interested in the vulnerability assessment were able to understand some of the technical aspects of the assessment, the tools used, and the proposed final products. At the end of the webinar, participants were directed to the locations where they could provide feedback on either the report or the ROAR map products.

The design of the webinar was to simply provide a concise dialogue to support the lengthy and robust vulnerability assessment. At the conclusion of the webinar, participants were encouraged to visit the Resilient Connecticut website where they would be able to review the entire report, appendices, and maps. Attendees were also told of how to provide feedback and comments on this report; the public comment period lasted 30 days for the month of October 2021.

4.1 COG Board and Committee Meetings

Members of both the consultant and CIRCA teams attended COG board and technical advisory committee meetings regularly starting in November 2020. The various committees and boards include:

- COG Board
- Transportation Technical
- Conservation Technical
- Regional Planning Commission

The frequency of meetings varied between COGs and the committees; therefore, the presentations were often tailored to the COG and the committee being presented to. Presentations typically included a brief update on the progress made in the previous month, milestones achieved, and ways the members should participate in the coming weeks.

To gauge the level of engagement effectiveness a “score card” was developed and periodically filled out post-meeting to track how effective the engagement was with the members. These cards tracked the committee met with, number of participants, topics covered, the quality of the message, and whether the message and meeting benefits communities with high social vulnerability.

While most COG meetings were useful for continuing to engage stakeholders and maintain project awareness, board and committee members often provided feedback and insight that proved critical to planning efforts. All feedback, input, and questions were recorded and considered for their impact on tool development, vulnerability assessment development, and ROAR identification. In addition, these meetings often reach municipal members that do not typically attend workshops or webinars as their staff members do; attendings these meetings provided an opportunity to engage CEOs that should be aware of the Resilient Connecticut effort, and resilience planning in general.

5. Engagement Outcomes

The various engagement events and methods provided both short-term project awareness and tool development support, but also aided in generating long-term awareness regarding climate resilience, regional collaboration, and adaptation needs and challenges.

5.1 Short-term Outcomes

All engagement events, such as workshops and webinars, had their own suite of short-term outcomes, which are detailed in the workshop reports. These short-term outcomes included:

- Stakeholder feedback for tool development

- Identifying vulnerable locations, assets, and infrastructure
- Insight into planning and grant support needs
- Stimulating regional stakeholder collaboration and conversation

These outcomes have several benefits including driving the Phase II planning process, identifying vulnerability and adaptation needs into future endeavors, and building relationships between stakeholders that will be critical to developing a more resilient region.

In addition to the workshops and webinars, the COG board and committee meetings that were attended throughout Phase II also aided in tool development and the planning process, but also acted as an additional platform for stakeholder discussion and collaboration.

The ArcGIS Online StoryMap, which was developed at the beginning of Phase II, provided an informational platform for those interested in Resilient Connecticut and Phase II products and progress. The StoryMap also encompassed a feedback page where those interested could provide insight into vulnerable locations in the region, adaptation desires, or tool specific feedback. Having various outlets such as the StoryMap creates a diverse project accessibility and opportunity for input.

5.2 Long-term Outcomes

One common long-term outcome from all project engagement is the continuous awareness and discussion surrounding climate resilience. In order to create more resilient communities, it is vital that conversations be had with stakeholders across municipal borders and from outside entities.

In addition, the engagement conducted throughout Phase II integrates communities and stakeholders into not just the Resilient Connecticut planning process, but other state efforts. Seeing as Resilient Connecticut is working to supplement and support endeavors such as those by the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3), those who participated in Phase II have also become aware and a part of other climate planning efforts.