

An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing houses, streets, and a body of water. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEMO" is centered in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

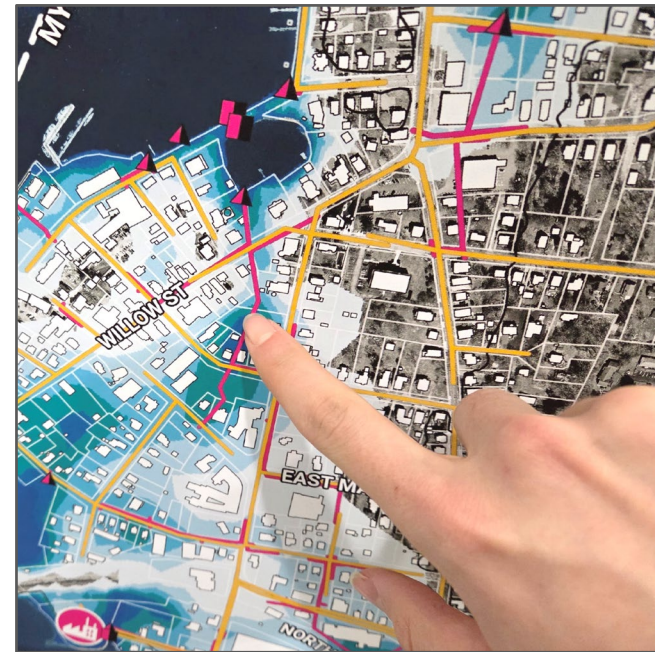
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEMO

Community-driven conversations guided adaptation concepts for *Resilient Mystic*, with the project team identifying key stakeholders, conducting targeted outreach, and integrating community input directly into recommendations. Through a strategic combination of outreach methods and timelines, this iterative design process refined the adaptation concept ideas over the course of weeks and months from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. Major community outreach efforts consisted of regular check-ins with the Citizen and Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC), tabling at public events, a three-day series of public workshops, and supplemental online materials as detailed below:

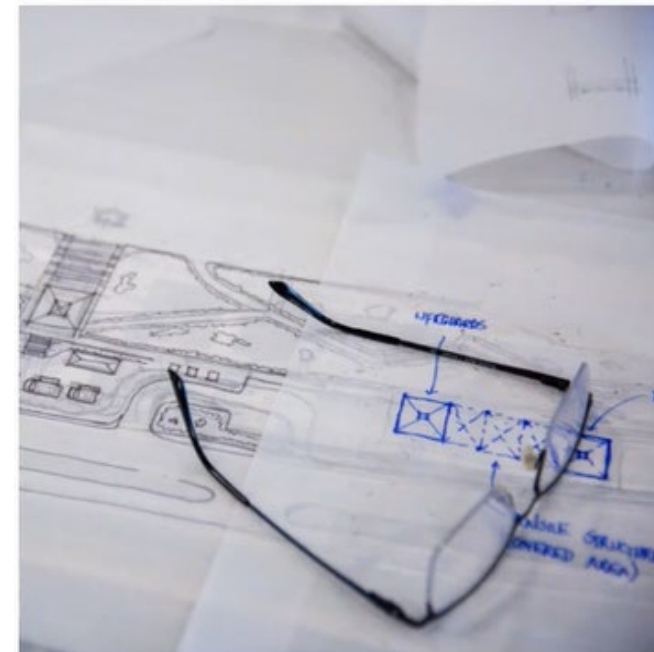
- The **Citizen and Technical Advisory Committee** held regular check-ins throughout the project and was comprised of Town Board and Task Force representatives, community members, political representatives, and leaders of local organizations. The group convened twice in the fall of 2024 to discuss project goals, review progress on coastal climate risk analysis, and establish focus areas. The CTAC met again throughout the Community Design Workshop and reconvened in April 2025 to review revised adaptation concepts.
- The project team hosted local “**roadshow**” **tabling events** in November 2024 and January 2025 to boost public awareness of the Community Design Workshop and solicit community input on asset mapping and preferred adaptation outcomes.
- A three-day in-person **Community Design Workshop** was hosted February 23-26, 2025. A set of online materials was also offered to complement these in-person events.



Gather Feedback



Concept
Development



Concept
Refinement



Final Concept
Presentation

Engagement with Town Leaders, the Citizen and Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC), and the public began after the initial modeling and analysis phases were complete. The consistent feedback loops ensured that the project was co-developed in response to input from all parties.

The support of the CTAC has been critical in guiding the direction and delivery of *Resilient Mystic*, representing a cross-section of local community and civic leaders. The CTAC came together numerous times before, during, and after the Community Design Workshop to offer feedback, distribute materials such as community surveys, and share major project updates.

Citizen and Technical Advisory Committee Members

Danielle Chesebrough	First Selectwoman, Town of Stonington
Deborah Downie	Selectwoman, Town of Stonington
Clifton Iler	Town of Stonington
Molly Evak	Town of Stonington
Shannon McKenzie	Mystic Seaport Museum
Megan Granato	Town of Groton
Maggie Favretti	Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
Tim Clark	TNC representative, Southeastern Connecticut
Helen Zincavage	SECCOG
Kim Hargrave	Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center
Dennis Main	Avalonia Land Trust
Tobias Glaza	Old Mystic History Center
Raheim Eleazer	Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
Brenda Geer	Eastern Pequot Nation
Rick Newton	Stonington Climate Change Task Force
David Rathbun	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Dennis Unites	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Robert Mohr	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Christopher Houlihan	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Kathryn Burchenal	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Nathan Phelps	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Eric Garofano	Stonington Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, and Erosion Control Board
Howard Reichart	Stonington Inland Wetlands & Water Courses Commission
Lou Allyn	Mystic Harbor Management Commission
Chuck Sheehan	Town of Stonington
Dan Smith	Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority
Julia Leeming	Julia Leeming Architect
Dominic Celtruda	Mystic Fire District Executive Committee Member

PRIORITIES

- **Address** critical transportation and resilience corridors
- **Address** shoreline/waterfront challenges: flood risk reduction, historic preservation, support tourism
- **Reduce** the impacts of extreme heat
- **Integrate** nature-based solutions + green stormwater infrastructure to realize multiple benefits

PROCESS

- **Understand** and **communicate** relative risks
- **Engage** the community to create the vision
- **Develop alternatives** based on risk mitigation and cost
- **Position** projects for implementation using identified state and federal funding



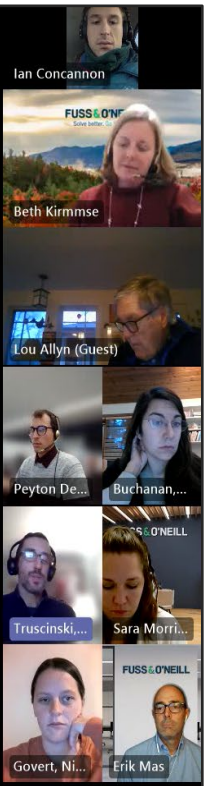
MYSTIC CLIMATE RISKS



RESILIENT MYSTIC



- What is accounted for in coastal flood risk modeling?
- o Maximum floodwater elevation, depth, and extent considering:
 - o Topography
 - o Storm Surge
 - o Waves
 - o Tidal Action
 - o Projected sea level rise



Screenshots taken from CTAC Meeting Presentations

The Town of Stonington has showcased its commitment to proactive climate planning by organizing a municipal Task Force and Board dedicated to advancing responses to local flooding and climate change issues. In addition, Stonington Town Selectpersons have championed local environmental causes throughout their tenures. The project team met with these local government representatives from Summer 2024 onward to coordinate this project with other ongoing initiatives and priorities for the Town.

A list of Town Selectpersons, members of the Flood Prevention Board, and members of the Climate Change Task Force is provided below. By design, many of these representatives also appeared as members of the CTAC, providing additional opportunities to shape project plans in different roles on the *Resilient Mystic* project.

Town of Stonington Project Representatives

Danielle Chesebrough	First Selectwoman
Deborah Downie	Selectwoman
Ben Tamsky	Selectman
Clifton Iler	Town Planner

Climate Change Task Force

Rick Newton
MaryEllen Mateleska
Dennis Unites
Susan Hibbard
Lyndsey Pyrke-Fairchild
Julia Parry
Sharon Lynch
Michael Serra
Jane Dawson
Chris Johnson

**Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience,
and Erosion Control Board**

David Rathbun
Dennis Unites
Robert Mohr
Christopher Houlihan
Kathryn Burchenal
Nathan Phelps
Robert Ulrich
Eric Garofano (Alternate)



FOCUS GROUPS (VIRTUAL SESSIONS)

Several stakeholder **focus groups** were held the week prior to the Community Design Workshop to align understandings of local climate vulnerabilities and solicit input on the upcoming in-person outreach events in Downtown Mystic. Digital focus group meetings held prior to the in-person workshop included those with:

Connecticut State Senator Heather Somers And Representative Aundré Bumgardner

In this meeting, the project team shared intentions for the upcoming three-day Community Design Workshop as well as defining flood and heat risk as they manifest within the project area. The group also reviewed strategies to invite further public engagement and share key takeaways following the conclusion of the workshop.

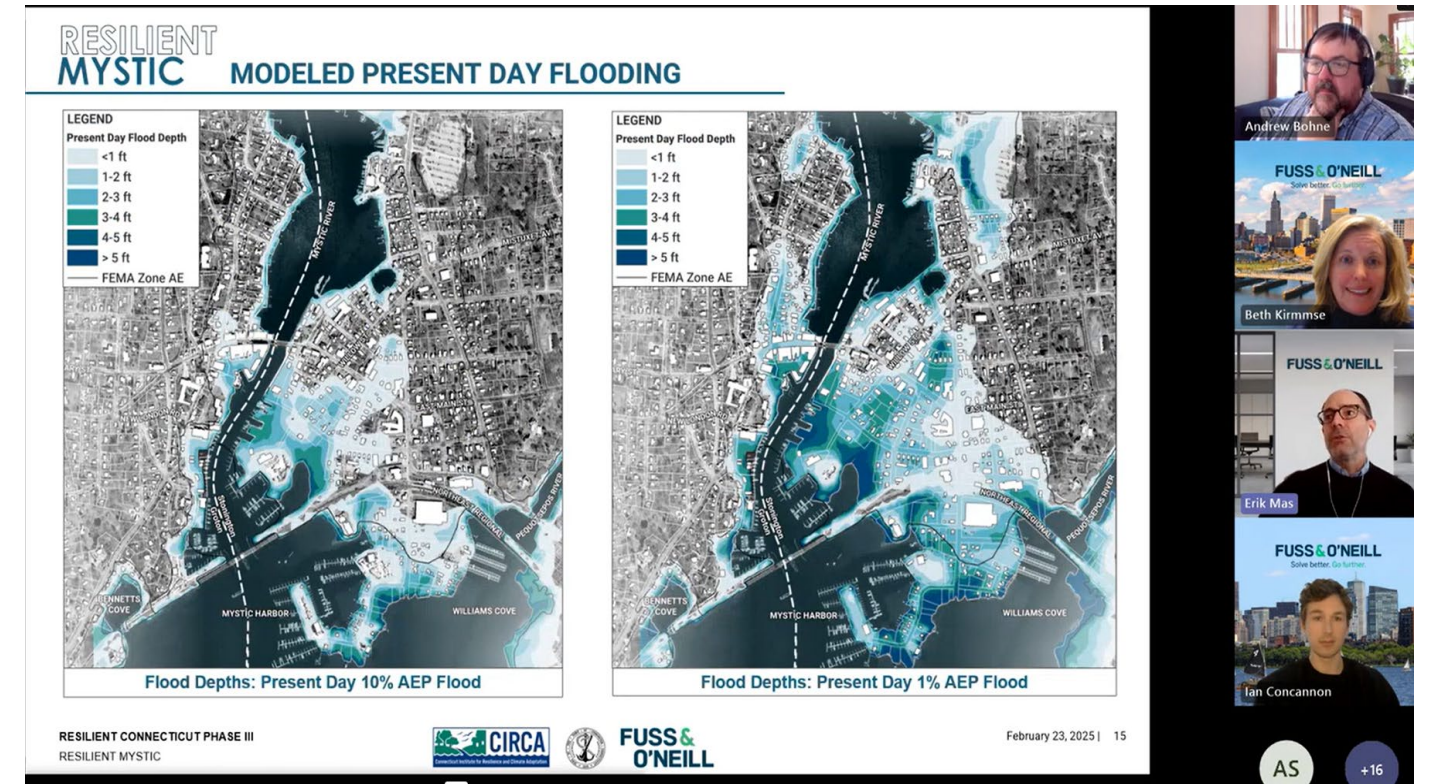
Public Safety Officials

Officials acknowledged flooding risk to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Apple Rehab facility. The group reviewed relocation options, evacuation routines, and Standard Operations Procedures for critical facilities and essential roadways.

KICKOFF EVENT

To ensure the workshop content was accessible to those who could not attend the full Community Design Workshop during the work week, the project team hosted a pre-workshop kickoff presentation describing the anticipated workshop schedule, summarizing the project goals and timeline, reviewing current and future climate risks, and introducing the coastal flood mitigation toolkit.

A recording of the presentation is available on the *Resilient Mystic* website: <https://shorturl.at/SZ7XN>



Screenshots from Virtual Kickoff Event

IN-PERSON KICKOFF AND WALKSHOP

The Community Design Workshop kicked off with a presentation summarizing current and future climate risks in Downtown Mystic assessed by the project team, along with community resources at risk due to climate change and case studies of successful coastal climate adaptation in urban areas.

Following the workshop, community members embarked on a walking tour of Downtown Mystic. The group discussed possibilities for streetscape changes, well-known locations of flood vulnerability, and the intersection of climate resilience and historic resources, among other topics.

FOCUS GROUPS

Houses Of Worship

The project team engaged with leaders of local faith communities to discuss shared climate risks and opportunities in Downtown Mystic. These conversations explored how houses of worship could enhance their structural resilience against extreme weather events while potentially serving as community resource hubs during climate emergencies.

Town Of Stonington Departments

The project team consulted with key municipal officials, including the Department of Public Works, Town Planner, Grant Coordinator, First Selectperson, And Town Engineer.

Discussions centered on potential funding sources for favored adaptation options, as well as land ownership and access issues at vulnerable locations. While Town of Stonington employees expressed openness to strategic retreat from especially risky areas, they anticipated potential challenges in coordinating these efforts with potentially larger numbers of private property owners.

Business Owners

Individual business owners met with the project team throughout the workshop to discuss options for envisioning changes to the community that would allow Mystic to persist.

PROJECT VISIONING SESSION

This session continued the dialogue begun in the morning kickoff, inviting community attendees to vote on their preferred vision for climate resilience in Downtown Mystic using preference boards that included adaptation alternatives including floodable green space, waterfront access, and living shoreline treatments.



Walkshop and Project Visioning Session

FOCUS GROUPS & OTHER OUTREACH

Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience, And Erosion Control Board

This meeting focused on the possibility of Routes 1 and 27 serving as elevated resilient corridors for evacuation, resilient utilities, and coinciding structural elevations. Additionally, the Board discussed the various focus area zones that had begun to emerge in conversations over the previous days.

Water Pollution Control Authority

The team conducted a special outreach session with representatives of the Stonington WPCA to learn about existing and potential plans to mitigate the risks posed by flooding at the Wastewater Treatment Plant on Murphy Point.

Mystic Seaport Museum, Aquarium And Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

Local tourism and environmental education institutions came together to discuss climate change risks, share institutional plans, and identify priority actions, with the goal of building stakeholder commitment, and inform community resilience planning.

CTAC

The CTAC convened multiple times to recap emerging workshop themes and outline potential resilience districts and corridors in Downtown Mystic.

Southeastern Connecticut Youth Climate Summit

On February 25, 2025, the project team attended the Youth Climate Summit at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center to engage youth surrounding the project area to hear what resilience measures they would hope to see in the project area, with *Resilient Mystic* relevant to the summit's theme of 'Living Sustainably'.

Williams-Mystic Coastal And Ocean Studies Program

Project team members met with Williams-Mystic students and faculty to discuss how their work intersected within the field of coastal environmental policy and planning.

PROJECT OPEN HOUSE

At this informal drop-in session, visitors approached project members to ask questions and co-develop climate adaptation concepts and design ideas.



Project Open House

Photos Credit: Anna Sawin

RESILIENT MYSTIC

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

FINAL WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

The February 26 final workshop presentation summarized the ground covered over the previous three days while elaborating on the climate adaptation concepts in key 'Focus Areas,' with a particular emphasis on resilient transportation corridors, repurposing open space for flood resilience, shoreline redesign, and strategies to open the conversation around building acquisition or relocation in especially flood-prone areas.

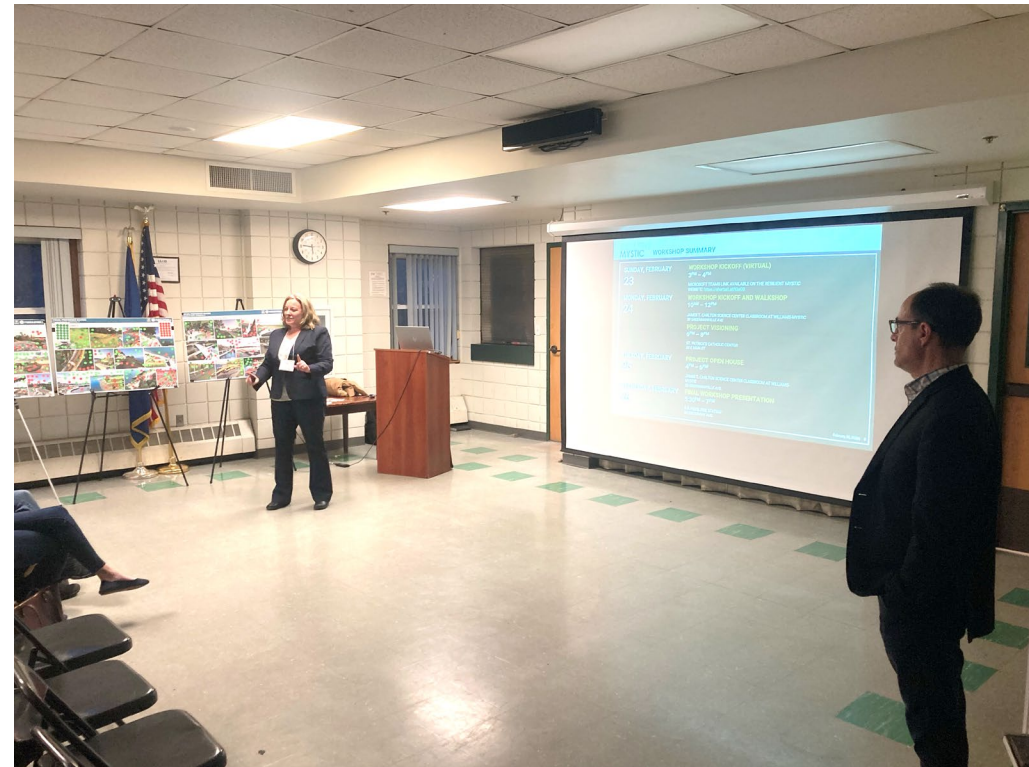
Together, these related, overlapping climate adaptation concepts covered the majority of Downtown Mystic, addressing current and future land uses, business needs, ecological health, and climate conditions. These early ideas helped pave the way for the eventual recommendations presented in the **Adaptation Concepts** section of this report.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

In-person workshops were supplemented with online materials, where workshop attendees were invited to submit photos of flood observations along with community preferences in areas of Downtown Mystic. This information proved invaluable in determining what changes to consider within the project area in response to coastal flooding and sea level rise.

The website URL and related links can be found here:

<https://shorturl.at/Kle00>



*Final presentation (left)
Concept renderings (above)*



RESILIENT MYSTIC

ABOUT

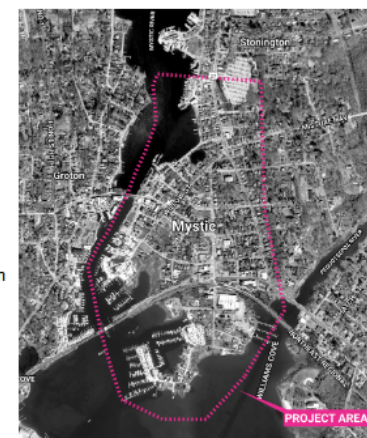
GET INVOLVED

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mystic, Connecticut has long forged its identity around its relationship to the sea. For centuries, ship builders and manufacturers have used Mystic Harbor's sheltered location as a staging ground for maritime commerce. Mystic today contains hundreds of historic sites, residential properties, and tourist attractions.

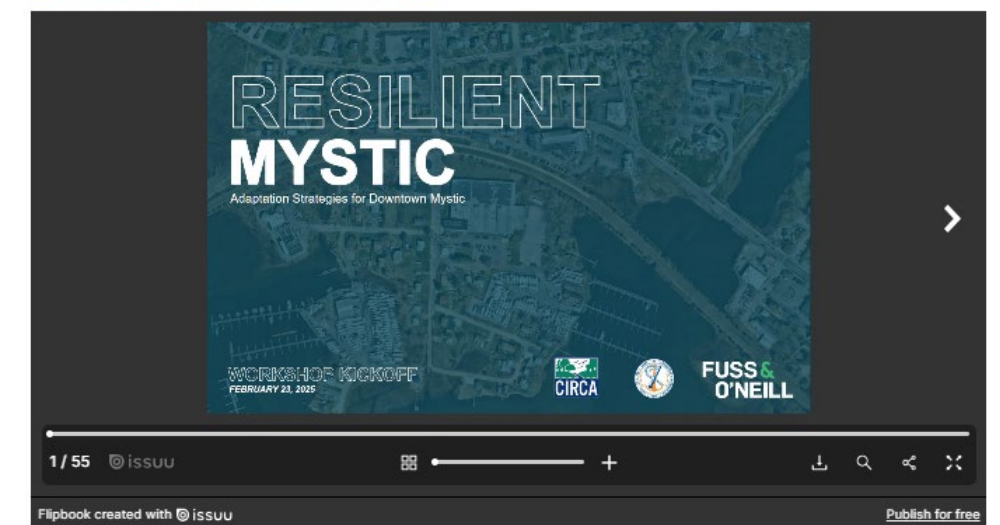
As the climate has changed and sea levels have risen, however, this proximity to the sea has led to increasingly frequent and severe coastal flooding. In response to this urgent threat, the town of **Stonington** and **Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA)** are coordinating with local stakeholders to identify coastal flood vulnerabilities and develop cost-effective solutions in the downtown area.

The **Resilient Mystic** plan provides a roadmap to reduce flood risks within the Town that retain regional transportation connectivity, protect critical facilities, and maintain the area's historic character.



Project Area: Downtown Mystic

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP KICKOFF: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2025



*Resilient Mystic Project Website Landing Page (left)
Website Content Includes Presentation Slides and Comment
Maps (above)*