



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BLOCK GRANT – DISASTER
RECOVERY (CDBG-DR)

Engagement Summary

November 14, 2023

Background

In September of 2021, the remnants of Hurricane Ida hit Philadelphia. This resulted in major property damage and extensive flooding. In response to Ida, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated \$163,204,000 in Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery funding to support long-term recovery and hazard mitigation efforts.

In order to design Hurricane Ida Recovery programs and activities that meaningfully benefit vulnerable and impacted residents, the City engaged community members in a variety of ways to ensure effective outreach. The City published the [CDBG-DR Action Plan](#) online and held a 30-day public comment period from July 14, 2023 to August 15, 2023. Two public hearings (one in-person and one virtual) were also held on August 8, 2023, to encourage resident feedback.

The City will continue outreach and engagement throughout the six-year life of the CDBG-DR program. Below is a snapshot of the engagement efforts the City has used so far.

CDBG-DR funds are primarily intended to support vulnerable Philadelphia residents most impacted by Hurricane Ida. The City's CDBG-DR Action Plan details how funding will be allocated to various programs, including:

- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Mitigation
- Planning
- Economic revitalization
- Public services

Philadelphia Voices Survey

The Philadelphia Voices Survey was a city-wide survey conducted by the Mayor's Policy Office in June 2023 in order to gain input from Philadelphia residents on various issues, including Hurricane Ida impacts. The survey yielded a sample size of 801 respondents and has a margin of error of +/- 2.45%. Results of the survey are shown to the right.

Figure 1: Philadelphia Voices Survey Results

WHO WE REACHED

801

RESIDENTS RESPONDED



49%

TEXT TO WEB



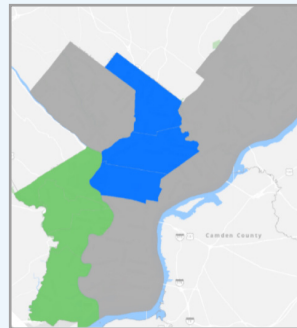
20%

PHONE CALL



31%

ONLINE



WEST AND NORTH PHILADELPHIA

RESIDENTS MOST LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY IDA

WHAT WE HEARD

22%

OF THIS 22%:

IMPACTED BY IDA



35%

WANT HOUSING ASSISTANCE



29%

WANT INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING



18%

WANT HOUSING RECOVERY



3%

WANT BUSINESS ASSISTANCE



14%

WANT SOMETHING "OTHER"

Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs)



Figure 3: Word Cloud of Small Group NAC Themes. Most commonly expressed words/phrases are larger in size

Key Themes:

When analyzing feedback from the 70+ residents who participated in NAC small group meetings, key themes emerged. The impacts of Hurricane Ida were profound. Many residents experienced flooded basements that affected their daily lives and voiced the need for assistance. Other residents were affected by fallen trees during the storm and called for better city maintenance via 311 to ensure reduced impacts going forward. Residents also recognized that having an older home can compound the negative impacts of storm events – worsening direct impacts and reducing future resilience. Issues with older housing stock can further compound the cost burden of recovery for economically insecure residents.

In the storm response realm, residents identified key areas of concern. Many residents encountered problems with obtaining insurance or raising premiums in the aftermath of Ida, impacting their ability to repair damages and feel secure in the face of future storm events. Additionally, there was widespread frustration with the aid/disaster recovery process amongst small group meeting participants. Individuals expressed disappointment with the amount of aid provided from the City and federal partners, as well as confusion about how aid was disbursed. These concerns overlap with calls for more transparency and effective engagement of community members in the aid process.

Participants also discussed issues for renters in Philadelphia – specifically related to landlord retaliation. Renters were concerned that landlords may retaliate against tenants who seek out aid by raising rents or even kicking tenants out of properties. Multiple residents floated the idea of not providing aid to landlords with histories of L&I violations/past abuses.

For next steps, residents asked for more information on FEMA applicants who did not receive assistance. A variety of factors influence which applicants receive FEMA assistance, so residents voiced the need for transparency and follow-up with applicants. Residents also expressed dissatisfaction with current city resources and voiced interest in a greater level of community involvement in CDBG-DR programming. Some residents called for a larger role of NACs and Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in CDBG-DR project intake and monitoring. One resident detailed a “Resident Task Force” model that would consist of community members (block captains, community leaders, etc.) from the most impacted areas of Philadelphia. These NAC/CDC funded Task Force Groups would be on the ground to address issues in CDBG-DR programming and focus on community education. This model could empower community members and better ensure effective design and implementation of CDBG-DR programs going forward.

Stakeholder Meetings and Consultations

In addition to engaging with community members, consultations with organizations and City departments are also vital to ensuring CDBG-DR programming reflects the unique needs of vulnerable Philadelphians. As of November 13, 2023, the City has introduced and explained the CDBG-DR Action Plan to 21 Community Based Organizations. These organizations include volunteer organizations, various CDCs and NACs, university partners, and many more. When analyzing outreach done to public sector partners, 47 entities have been engaged – including but not limited to transportation agencies, offices for elected officials, utilities departments, public health offices, and disaster recovery partners.

Public Comment Period and Hearings

In line with HUD standards and City of Philadelphia best practices, a 30-day public comment period was open and advertised in order to allow public feedback on the CDBG- DR Action Plan. The public comment period was open from July 14, 2023, to August 15, 2023. Philadelphians were able to email CDBG-DR@phila.gov with comments or send physical mail with comments to the City's CDBG-DR office. **83 written comments were received during the public comment period.**

In addition to the 30-day comment period, two public hearings were held on August 8, 2023 –one remote over Zoom and one in person at 1234 Market Street. Across these 2 public hearings, **14 oral comments from community members were given. In total, the public comment period and hearings yielded 97 comments from Philadelphia residents.** These 97 comments were analyzed and coded for key themes – the most common of which are included below in order of frequency:

1. Housing
2. Mitigation
3. High Cost Burden of Ida Recovery
4. Infrastructure
5. Eligibility Questions
6. Disaster Preparedness
7. Sanitation Issues
8. Renter's Issues

Outreach to advertise the comment period and public hearing was done through email blasts, word of mouth, newspaper advertisements, and social media. Screenshots of the public comment coding are included below:

Figure 5: Public Comment Theme Coding 1

Code	Comment
Public Services, Eligibility Questions	Public Services – How much money is going to CDC? And would they have to apply?
Housing, Renter's Issues	How does the proposed Homeowner Repair Program and Rental Assistance Program tie back to Ida?
Housing	Housing Repair Program – How does that address targeted title?
Planning, Housing, Renter's Issues, Eligibility Questions	Planning – Is there intention to examine expiration of HUD requirements for renters (affordability, senior housing, tax credits, etc.)?
Economic Revitalization, Eligibility Questions	Why is the \$163 M available? Where did it come from? How will the DR Program address needs that aren't managed by CDC?
Housing, Eligibility Questions	Economic Revitalization – Can a business owner apply for support without having relation to SBA Merchants Fund?
Planning, Disaster Preparedness	Is it necessary to have estimates of damage (experienced by homeowner)?
Effective Engagement	Planning – Does it cover preparedness (e.g. evacuation, transport sensors, etc.)?
	Elaborate on public engagement and outreach? Does this include local community organizations (e.g. Friends of...)

Figure 6: Public Comment Theme Coding 2

Code	Comment
Green Infrastructure, Infrastructure	Please make home repair funds allocated in the City of Philadelphia's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program available to residents living in the 100-year flood plain.
Mitigation, Housing	The City is proposing two necessary housing rehabilitation programs.
Renter's Issues	I am a resident of the Eastwick Community in the city of Philadelphia. I have resided in this community for more than twenty years and been the victim of the aftermath of two major flooding events since living here. The first was hurricane Floyd September 1, 1999 the most recent hurricane Isaias August 4, 2020. During both of these floods I received
Frustration with Recovery Process, Frustration with Recovery Process, Housing, Basements, Housing, Economic Revitalization, High Cost Burden, Mitigation	Community Legal Services official statement - Here https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GytpwqjKxKDK1Vg_uBtHmKf7SjyQ/viiew?usp=drive_link
Housing, Renter's Issues, Mitigation, Public Services, Infrastructure, High Cost Burden	Good evening. I am comment on the grant and for 7800 block of Saturn place. I feel like this area should be taking in serious consideration because us as a community lose so much when the floods occur.
Mitigation	I am writing to submit a comment about the current draft of the CDBG-DR Action Plan. My comment relates to funding allocation for managing combined sewer overflow in the Schuylkill River.

Next Steps

Outreach and engagement will continue throughout the lifetime of the grant which will be implemented over a six-year period. It is a priority to remain active in community outreach while conducting inclusive and equitable engagement that will inform and help create programs for the whole community, with a special emphasis on historically vulnerable and underserved areas.

Looking ahead, we hope to ramp up engagement once program details have been finalized and projects start applying for funding. Recapping engagement on a rolling basis will be a City priority, so stay tuned for updates on the residents we have collaborated with throughout the process!

In the meantime, stay in touch in touch by reaching out to CDBG-DR@phila.gov for more information.