

# HIGHLIGHTED STORY

When prompted to consider chronic flooding, our listening session participants had much to say. This is one participant's story of how short-term decisions about redevelopment after storms can have irreversible consequences for the ecosystem and the people who live on the coast.



# Short-term decision: Redevelopment after storms

“I think about storms as being this inflection point. Do we choose to continue to live or work or exist where we did prior to this event, or do we move to somewhere that’s a little less risky?”



# Our participant believes individuals have responsibility in redevelopment choices and flooding control...

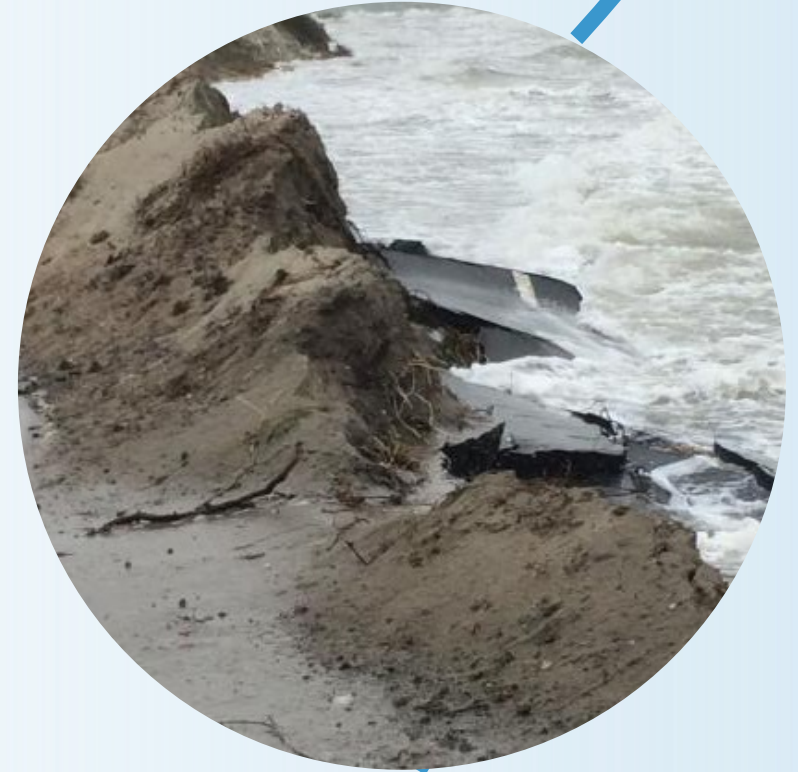
“A lot of residents move here from other states or other parts of the state...They are under the assumption that their government, whether it is local or state, has put in ordinances and laws that protect their house from flooding. Why should they worry about it? So they don't understand why the government doesn't come back in and fix it after it's a problem.”





**...but they also believe the government, developers, and those responsible for larger rebuilding endeavors should be accountable:**

“After Hurricane Irene, there was a plan to not rebuild roads that were washed out by the storm but instead bridge them, and that was on the books before the storm happened. But then the road got washed out and two days later, they were filling it in and rebuilding the road instead of bridging it.”



# Those short-term decisions have consequences: our participant saw increased risk of flooding and rising flood insurance premiums.

"I'll just give an example from my in-laws. They were flooded out in Hurricane Florence and it was their third storm in a decade. After three storms, they said we're done, and they leveled the house and moved. So people are making those kinds of decisions, you know? It's based largely on what their insurance policies were willing to provide and their age. They didn't want to be dealing with hurricane damage every so often. I think it's a complicated emotional decision as well."



# Their in-laws weren't the only ones. Our participant has seen their community change because people can no longer afford to live there.

“Especially with redevelopment, I can think of scenarios where it's a trailer flat on the ground and it's flooded from a hurricane. Then FEMA says that you have to put the house on stilts or sell. The owner can't afford to do that, and they're moved from their lifelong home under circumstances that they can't control. We see that a lot in the area, and that's property that had been in families for generations, they don't want to leave.”



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# But they understand this is a complex issue and it is hard to get community buy-in when it's needed....

“We go through the storm and we're ready to have everything we need in order to access the people and places we need next time. But then there's that kind of basic need to recover quickly so that they can get back to the status quo. Long term considerations kind of go out the door. Any time we have flooding or lose power, I'm just so ready to get back, whatever it takes. Let's get back to where I'm comfortable again.”



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**...as well as buy-in from businesses, developers, and other organizations.**

“But there's still a lot of tourism, and so people are making their money. And having the road washed out is impacting their ability to make it through the winter. All of these individual impacts are coloring the decisions. Even if you had a really strong plan in place to bridge instead of go back in and go back to the status quo after redevelopment, how do you get the community to buy into that need for that longer term vision to be implemented? Again, it's emotional. It's financial. It's real for everyone on – it may be life threatening to not have access.”





Despite it being a complex issue, our participant believes there are things that can be done. For example, more expedient updating of flood maps to halt development in areas we know will flood.

“We have a really good idea of what's going to flood next but we can't tell a developer you can't build there because that flood map hasn't been updated. On a short-term basis the flood map from the state needs to be updated now so that we can make the appropriate decisions to protect people's property, to protect developments and communities.”



# Finally, they believe everyone can play a part!

“I mean my perspective is that all of these entities [local and state government, community organizations, individual residents, other organizations] are stakeholders in all of these decisions, and I can't think of one decision that would not align with all of these groups.”

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