

“Community Visioning for Edgemere”



Introduction

At the same moment that the “**Community Visioning for Edgemere**” project was wrapping up, a United Nations report was issued declaring that “nations aren’t doing nearly enough to protect cities, farms and coastlines from the hazards that climate change has unleashed so far, such as record droughts and rising seas, let alone from the even greater disasters in store as the planet continues to warm.” Noted as “an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership,” the report revealed “how people and the planet are getting clobbered by climate change.”¹ Later that week, climate change scientists threatened to go on strike in their extreme frustration at the non-response to the compelling evidence of the threatening realities of climate change.

Meanwhile, in a neighborhood on the Rockaway peninsula in Queens, New York, homeowners and renters, students of all ages, local business owners, community leaders, service providers, gardeners and farmers, and others from the greatest diversity of backgrounds had been working steadily through

¹ Brad Plumer & Raymond Zhong, “Time Is Running Out to Avert a Harrowing Future, Climate Panel Warns,” *New York Times*, Feb. 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/28/climate/climate-change-ipcc-un-report.html>.

the past year to envision a more sustainable future. Following years of government neglect, and in the face of extensive flooding due to frequent and intense storms and sea level rise, the people of Edgemere had united to envision a plan for their community that would utilize vacant land to provide needed amenities while mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Funded through The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) climate action focus helping vulnerable communities adapt to climate change, and led by the Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity (RISE), a local organization working to advance social and environmental equity in the Rockaways, and the Collective for Community, Culture & Environment (CCCE), a social justice focused planning, design and policy firm, a project **led by the community** was building the agency of this historically marginalized community. Neighbors were working through how to articulate and advocate their own response to climate change.

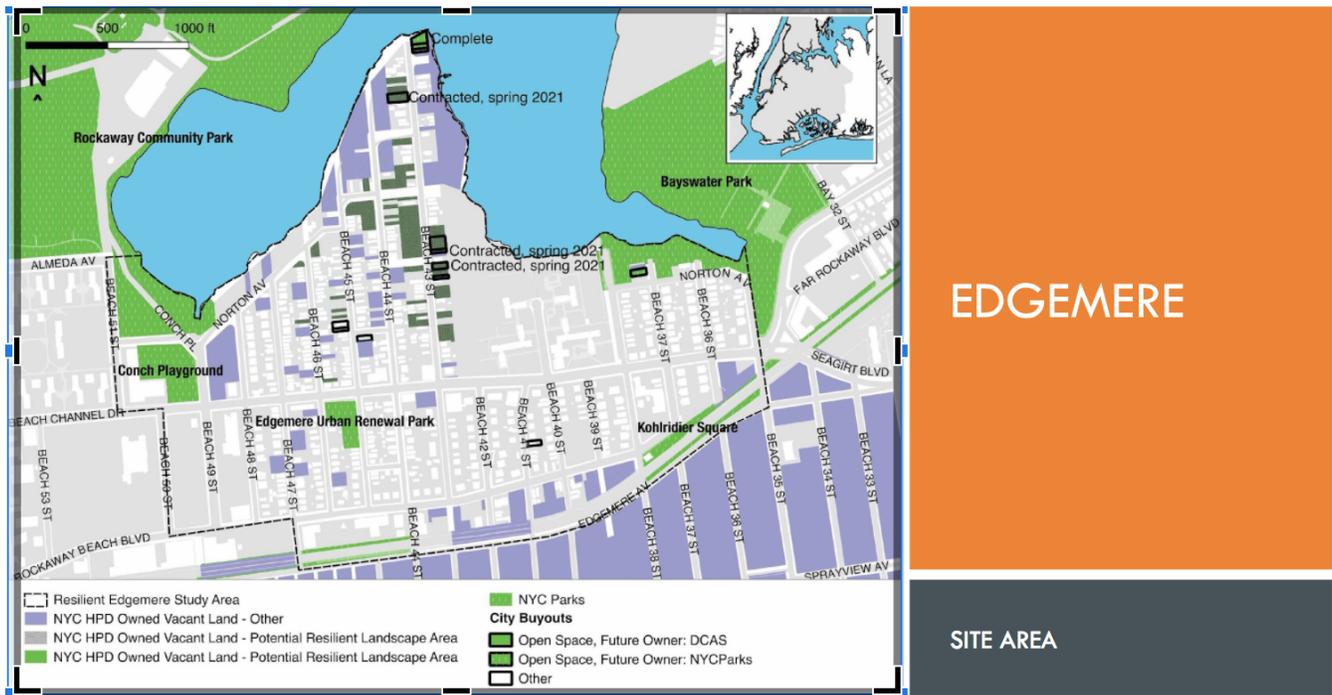
There is, by now, well-documented evidence of the disproportionate impact of climate change on low- and moderate-income communities of color. Neighborhoods like Edgemere have increased exposure due to their location as well as augmented vulnerability through intensified demand on their already taxed resources. Through focused organizing and strategic support, **Community Visioning for Edgemere** worked to center and amplify the voices of community stakeholders who are often excluded from civic forums, including but not limited to youth and young people, Black and Brown residents, tenants of public housing, and recent immigrants from other countries.

This effort galvanized enormous creativity, resiliency, and expertise in the creation of an inclusive, equitable community vision to marshal the great many parcels of vacant, city-owned land as a resource to protect Edgemere from flooding and respond to the community's identified need for recreation, food, economic generators, art, and beauty.

In pooling their resources and garnering their imagination, the people of Edgemere brought great power to undertake the urgent and necessary work of adapting to climate change. It is essential that their vision be heard.



Overview



In 2020, TNC issued a call to engage communities undergoing “managed retreat,” the relocation of people and infrastructure from coasts or floodplains to deal with flooding due to climate change.² The intended goal of this effort was to build consensus around a community-created vision for socially and ecologically beneficial use of undeveloped, flood-prone lands. In February 2021, TNC awarded a grant to RISE to work with CCCE to establish a community-driven visioning process in Edgemere, a coastal community on the Rockaway peninsula in Queens, NY.

In 2012, Edgemere had experienced significant damage from storm surge during Hurricane Sandy and had since been the focus of myriad government initiatives to assist residents and homeowners with repair of their homes or relocation (see Appendix I - “Post-Sandy Recovery Programs”). By the start of this project, the area was marked by numerous vacant parcels of land which had been bought-out by the City of New York in an effort to protect the coastal community of Edgemere from flooding.

The project focused on 55 city-owned vacant lots located on the “bayside” between Beach Channel Drive, Beach 43rd Street, Jamaica Bay, and Beach 50th Street. These lots accounted for approximately 40% of the overall 119 vacant lots in the neighborhood that had been designated for the “Edgemere Community Land Trust,” a project of the NYC Department of Housing, Preservation & Development (HPD) as part of the city’s coastal resilience effort to rezone the Rockaways. A key component of the “Resilient Edgemere Plan” to facilitate long term affordability and mitigate long term flood risk

² The Nature Conservancy, “Community Visioning for Vacant Land following Managed Retreat in New York – Request for Full Proposals,” Nov. 20, 2020.

concurrent with the development of coastal protection infrastructure, the Edgemere Community Land Trust (CLT) targets 119 vacant lots in Edgemere, including 62 for residential development, 55 for open-space, and 2 for commercial use, that will be rezoned to allow for climate resilient development that will benefit the already existing community in Edgemere.

Through a community-led process, the **Community Visioning for Edgemere** project worked to build broad-based participation and consensus for a vision for the socially and ecologically beneficial use of this vacant land with these initial goals:

- Initiating a community vision for socially and ecologically equitable use of Edgemere’s vacant and/or underdeveloped, flood prone land building off of ongoing and emerging community initiatives;
- Building relationships between and among Edgemere’s residents and community stakeholders as well as with the key government actors;
- Increasing awareness about “living with water” and the city, federal, and local resiliency initiatives to develop and support community involvement and land stewardship;
- Providing a forum for community-driven visioning by engaging a wide variety of voices; and
- Aligning community priorities and goals for the buyout parcels and other vacant land to inform the ongoing development of the Edgemere Community Land Trust.

The Team

Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability & Equity (RISE) has led initiatives created “by the community for the community” to strengthen the places and people most often overlooked or marginalized in the Rockaways. Since 2005, RISE has worked with local youth and residents of all ages on community planning initiatives and conservation efforts to improve local health, livability, and sustainable development in the Rockaways.

Jeanne Dupont, Founder and Executive Director

As founder and executive director of RISE, Jeanne has worked closely with the Rockaway community and city agencies since 2005, developing strategies to redevelop large stretches of underutilized public land for the good of the community. Much of her work has involved organizing community members and youth in utilizing outdoor space for programming focused on social equity, health, and environmental justice. Jeanne has a master's degree in design from Yale University.

Daniel J Borrero, Project Manager & Former Youth Programs Administrator

A former student in RISE's youth programs as well as the former Youth Programs Administrator, Daniel has rejoined RISE as a Project Manager to lead the initiative Community Visioning in Edgemere. He grew up in the Rockaways and enjoys relaxing at the beach and kayaking in the bay. He received a bachelor's degree in Urban Design and Architecture from New York University and a Master of Fine Arts in Architectural History from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Daniel's passion is helping communities

understand the past, through the built environment, to ensure equitable and healthy futures for current residents.

Daris Garnes, Interview Coordinator & Volunteer

Daris Garnes (Queen Daris) is a community advocate and artist who resides in Rockaway Queens, New York. Daris is the host of The Rockaway Queens on Instagram, a show about the Rockaway community and its culture as well as happenings on the Rockaway peninsula. **Daris featured a five-part series on The Rockaway Queens showcase highlighting businesses and residents of Edgemere as a collaborator on the Community Visioning in Edgemere project.** Daris also facilitated the Arts Focus Group during forum 3. In addition, Daris is a long-term volunteer with RISE's Farm share program and advocates for food justice. Queen Daris is available on **Instagram @therockawayqueens and @QueenDarisinc** to host wellness workshops and to teach art and media.

Veronica Olivotto, Research Consultant

Veronica is a researcher, teacher, and consultant working on urban climate change adaptation and risk reduction with a keen interest in the negotiation of social justice in climate resilience planning. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Public and Urban Policy at the New School of New York. In the past, Veronica worked on climate change related assignments and training for the German Development Agency (GIZ), the European Commission, and various branches of the United Nations. Veronica holds degrees from Erasmus University Rotterdam (M.Sc Urban Management and Development, 2010), Edinburgh-Napier University (M.Sc Ecotourism, 2007) and Milan University (B.A. Tourism and Local Community, 2005).

Judah Asimov, Former Senior Manager, Planning and Outreach

Judah led the Community Visioning in Edgemere project until his departure from RISE in August 2021. Prior to joining RISE, Judah was involved in working on political campaigns and governmental relations. He has led public outreach and coordination in the Rockaways since 2015. During his time at RISE, Judah promoted RISE Programs and collaborated with local youth on planning and public placemaking initiatives. Judah has a bachelor's degree in Comparative Government from Wesleyan University and a Master's in City & Regional Planning from Pratt Institute. He currently works at the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

Delaney Morris, Former Community Resiliency Graduate Fellow

Delaney's work centers on the intersections of culture and climate change with projects focused on resiliency, adaptation, and migration. She is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Sustainable Environmental Systems from Pratt Institute as well as a certificate in Emergency Management & Disaster Recovery from the University of California-Irvine. She has worked for UN-Habitat, the Municipal Art Society of New York, and many other organizations across the country and globe. Delaney holds an MS in Urban Placemaking & Management and a BA in Live & Performing Arts Management.

The Collective for Community, Culture & Environment (CCCE) works to further economic, social, and environmental justice and sustainability by helping communities shape decisions that affect their lives. CCCE's projects throughout the NY-NJ-CT area bring diverse expertise to frontline communities.

Beth Rosenthal, MS

Beth is a consultant specializing in building effective nonprofit organizations and multi-party collaborations. Through her consulting firm, *Collaboration and Change, LLC*, Beth conducts research and policy analysis, provides strategic planning, training, and facilitation, and designs approaches for participatory planning, impactful organizing, and large-scale advocacy. She partners with government, philanthropic, and nonprofit clients to produce new ventures and tangible improvements in housing and local development, food security, sustainable agriculture, child welfare, family justice, climate change, and environmental and public health. She has co-created and/or led pioneering collaborations including the *Washington Heights-Inwood Coalition*, the *Child Welfare Organizing Project*, *Just Food*, the *National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse*, and *Children's Global Health Fund*. Beth has taught at NYU Wagner School of Public Service and graduate social work programs at Columbia University and Hunter-CUNY (Silberman) and has published scholarly research.

Meta Brunzema, Architecture & Urban Design

Meta's work focuses on socially progressive, culturally rich, and climate-neutral design. Working with public agencies, non-profit organizations and private clients, her designs foster resilience and re-ignite curiosity and meaningful engagement with the world. Her work includes large-scale re-zonings, waterfront developments, urban parks, promenades, and green infrastructure - as well as public open spaces. Her architectural and adaptive re-use work focuses on the design of healthy and sustainable buildings and interiors. She is currently co-developing WE_GENERATE (beta), an interactive parametric real-estate feasibility analysis and visualization tool that democratizes community planning processes.

Zehra Kuz, Architecture and Environmental Design

Zehra is a registered architect and adjunct professor at the Pratt Institute School of Architecture. Her work focuses on how the changing climate and prevailing environmental pressures affect urban life especially in Metro New York. As a primary investigator for "Fluid Frontiers: Stormwater Management," a multi-faceted research initiative for Brooklyn's Red Hook Zehra focused on quantifying stormwater impact through CSOs on coastal waters, explored feasible strategies for public-private partnerships, and engaged local communities in the implementation of innovative solutions toward achieving the Clean Water Act. Zehra also co-led a NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) task order, "Design Guidelines for Equity (Part 1) and Evoking Equity (Part 2)" for DDC's "Design and Construction Excellence 2.0, Guiding Principles" as a way to make public facilities responsive to the communities where they are located. Presently, at Pratt Institute's School of Architecture she co-leads RAMP (Recover, Adapt, Mitigate, and Plan) an interdisciplinary initiative that, together with respective community leaders, explores design, policy, and planning strategies for vulnerable

waterfront neighborhoods. She has worked with local leaders in Jamaica Bay as well as most of NYC’s SMIA’s (Significant Maritime Industrial Areas).

Ana Fisyak, Community Engagement

Ana is an urban planner, researcher, and strategist dedicated to a community-based approach. She is currently the Community Engagement Manager for Equinor where she engages New York communities in the development of offshore wind projects to meet New York State’s goal of 9GW by 2035. She has provided technical assistance for NYC communities and community-based organizations for over a decade, especially collaborating with organizations in low-income communities of color and environmental justice areas. She has held positions at the Pratt Center for Community Development, WXY, J. Max Bond Center / City College of New York (CCNY), and the Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity (RISE). She is passionate about engaging frontline communities in both natural and hard infrastructure and investing in people and communities most impacted by climate change. She teaches at Parsons / New School.

Margaret Seip, Community Planning & Development

Margaret (Peg) is an urban planner specializing in community-based development through participatory strategies. Her work, developing parks and playgrounds, affordable housing, and community services through collaborative engagement and project management, has supported diverse stakeholders in the creation and implementation of their vision. Her recent work with Habitat for Humanity in Paterson, NJ generated a plan for the “Passaic Greenway,” a riverwalk that would add needed community open space to areas experiencing flooding and chemical contamination. She is a recipient of the NJ American Planning Association 2020 Planning Excellence for Distinguished Service and has a master’s degree in urban planning from Columbia University.



Community Advisory Committee

Integral to this project are the leaders who contributed their own deep knowledge, expertise, and networks representing Edgemere's diverse community. The community advisors provided skilled guidance and awareness at all phases of the work and received a stipend for their work on the project.



Blossom Jaurey, RISE Shore Corps Intern

Blossom Jaurey is a high school student who is part of RISE's Shore Corps program. She began working with the Shore Corps after-school program in 9th grade and is currently in 11th. Over these three years, she has gained knowledge that she never would have gotten at school. From information about endangered species in the environment to how to create a resume and be prepared for a job interview, the program has provided her with numerous lessons. The Community Visioning project was another initiative and amazing learning experience that she was able to gain through the Shore Corps program. She is so excited to see how everyone's efforts will transform Edgemere.

Jacqueline Rogers, President, The Garden by the Bay

Jackie has been the President of The Garden by the Bay since 2021. She has traded her corporate organizational skills into lending her expertise to her community as a community advocate, civic leader, grant writer, and place maker. She believes in building connectors within the community where all community members are represented and welcomed. Jackie believes in the power and the importance of community economics, opportunities, and entrepreneurship within communities of color for the people by the people. Through her leadership skills she has empowered community members from various social and economic demographics into mobilizing for a more equitable and just Rockaway through social justice initiatives, civic engagement projects, partnerships with other civic and community organizations, and educational forums on COVID-19 vaccinations. She has also hosted and lectured architecture graduate students on the impact and importance of community gardens and green space in communities of color that face food insecurity and environmental and social injustices. Jackie can be reached through email for questions and partnerships at thegardenbythebay@gmail.com.





Ebony Littlejohn-Beatty, Executive Director, Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation

Ebony’s work with Ocean Bay CDC centers on creating and building partnerships with nonprofits, government agencies, and community leaders to provide information, referrals, and in-house services to NYCHA residents in Edgemere and the Rockaway peninsula. She has been instrumental in the start of the Ocean Bay CDC’S Women’s Support Group and the Senior Citizen program, providing workshops to promote healthy lifestyles. Ebony served as co-chair of the Far Rockaway Arverne Nonprofit Coalition from 2018-2020. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Sociology and a master’s degree with a concentration in counseling.

Mike Repasch-Nieves, Farm Manager, Edgemere Farm



Mike Repasch-Nieves is a native New Yorker and self-professed city kid. He, along with his wife Vanessa, has been managing Edgemere Farm since 2019. Edgemere Farm is an award-winning half-acre urban farm in Far Rockaway, NY. In the wake of 2012’s Hurricane Sandy, the farm’s founders transformed an abandoned city-owned lot into a lush and productive space, where a wide variety of fresh and organically grown vegetables, flowers, and herbs are now cultivated. Chickens, bees, and many varieties of pollinators call the farm home as well. The farm, which is supported by NYC Parks / GreenThumb, GrowNYC, and Partnerships For Parks, is a volunteer-run, zero-profit organization with a mission of education, food justice, and increasing capacity for both the production of food and the processing of food waste on the Rockaway peninsula. Providing the surrounding community (a federally designated “food desert”) access to fresh produce and education is a core part of our mission, as well as providing a safe space where people of all backgrounds are invited to participate. The farm also serves as a community composting site and partners with local restaurants, collecting and composting their food waste, as part of one of New York City’s only fully functional closed-loop food waste initiatives.

The project’s broad network included numerous grassroots leaders and community-based organizations who participated in forums and provided crucial guidance. Information provided by government agencies including HPD and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) deepened the understanding of the projects and policies that would impact the community and its land. Ongoing support from universities including Pratt Institute, City College, and Columbia University lent valuable assistance to the effort.

Edgemere



Edgemere is a low-lying waterfront community on the Rockaway peninsula in southeastern Queens, New York City, extending from Beach 32nd to Beach 59th Street (East to West) and from the Jamaica Bay to the Atlantic Ocean (North to South) and sharing boundaries with the communities of Arverne to the west and Far Rockaway to the east.

Edgemere's history involves a long and complicated relationship with the water as well as inequitable housing, land use, and development patterns. As early as 1892, when a group of investors purchased a large area of land to the west of the recently established Far Rockaway, ocean waves and sandy beaches drew New Yorkers from the bustling city to the peninsula. The Edgemere Hotel at Beach 35th Street opened in 1895, only to close one year later after being buried under tons of sand during a storm.³ Undaunted, developers brought a mix of seaside amusements, state-of-the-art hotels, and homes for summer vacationers to the Rockaways. It was said that "millions of dollars' worth of entertainment" were spent by millions of people who came to the Rockaways to enjoy the ocean, boardwalk, and other amusements.⁴

The housing developed to serve the summer population ranged from crowded bungalow colonies to rooming houses in varying conditions. As these properties aged, landlords skimmed on repairs,

³ "Forgotten New York: Edgemere Queens," Jan. 24, 2005, <https://forgotten-ny.com/2005/11/edgemere-queens/>.

⁴ Lawrence Kaplan and Carol P. Kaplan, "Between Ocean and City: The Transformation of Rockaway, New York" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

maintaining only the most minimum standards. Toilets were shared, cold-water showers were outdoors, and frequent and catastrophic fires occurred in the areas of densely packed wood frame buildings. In Arverne and Edgemere, seasonal service people as well as maintenance and construction workers, many of them African Americans who had come to the Rockaways in the great migration north, resided year-round in these very same substandard and ill-equipped bungalows and rooming houses. Women, hired as domestics, seamstresses, and other service level summer workers, and men, as “handymen” for random maintenance and repairs, worked in highly exploitative, low-wage work conditions and often faced unemployment and homelessness at summer’s end.⁵

Addressing these deplorable conditions, in 1931, local African American women formed the Women’s Industrial Service League (the League) to help the many women set adrift by summer employers. The League provided fares for transit back home to the south or, for those who wished to stay in the north, assistance in finding housing and employment. They built a large dormitory and activity center in the Redfern neighborhood. Powered by a board of 14 African American women, the League was an early show of local force to respond to deplorable conditions. They continued to advocate for the health and well-being of the Rockaways’ African American population through direct services as well as by supporting rights events, campaigning against segregation, and promoting the development of improved and affordable housing.⁶

Transportation to and within the Rockaways was challenged by clogged and crowded local thoroughfares and limited access from the mainland. The Long Island Rail Road’s (LIRR) one direct line to the Rockaways via a wooden trestle over Jamaica Bay was frequently disabled by fires in the marshes and on land once it reached the peninsula.⁷ Through the late 1930s and early 1940s, Robert Moses’ “Rockaway Improvement Plan” resolved many of these problems with the renovation of the Cross Bay Bridge, construction of the Marine Parkway Bridge, and elevation of the LIRR.⁸ In 1956, an IND line, now the MTA A-train line, was extended to serve the peninsula.

Beginning in the 1950s, on top of the redlining and blockbusting that had segregated the Rockaways, “urban renewal” targeting primarily African American and minority neighborhoods demolished hotels, boarding homes, and large swaths of bungalows. These were replaced with large scale public housing projects in Arverne, Hammels, Redfern, and Edgemere used as places to house the poor and working class *away* from the city center. “Though only a tiny fraction of the population of Queens lived in the Rockaways, it would soon contain more than half of its public housing.”⁹ Following this trend, through the 1970s and 1980s, vulnerable populations continued to be moved to Edgemere at the edge of the city, including recently deinstitutionalized mental patients (into remaining boarding houses) and the frail elderly (into high-rise nursing homes). The City continued its vision of

⁵ Kaplan and Kaplan, “Between Ocean and City: The Transformation of Rockaway, New York.”

⁶ Kaplan and Kaplan, “Between Ocean and City: The Transformation of Rockaway, New York.”

⁷ Kaplan and Kaplan, “Between Ocean and City: The Transformation of Rockaway, New York.”

⁸ New York City, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, “Resilient Edgemere Plan,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/resilient-edgemere-report.pdf>.

⁹ Jonathan Mahler, “How the Coastline Became a Place to Put the Poor,” *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/nyregion/how-new-york-citys-coastline-became-home-to-the-poor.html>.

constructing affordable housing in Edgemere over the subsequent decades, acquiring lots for development. In 1997, the City established the Edgemere Urban Renewal Area, encompassing the area roughly north of Edgemere Avenue from Beach 49th Street to Beach 35th Street, with the intended goal of improving infrastructure and building over 800 units of affordable housing. Yet, by the time the housing market collapsed in 2008, less than half of the planned housing had been built, leaving quite a bit of vacant city-owned land in Edgemere even before Hurricane Sandy devastated the neighborhood in 2012.¹⁰

By 2022, Queens Community District 14, comprising all of the Rockaway peninsula, had over 3000 units of public housing, the largest concentration of Section 8 voucher placements in the Borough of Queens, over 5000 nursing and adult home beds, and a new homeless shelter. In addition, there are many homeless placements in local hotels. Community Board 14 has called for the City to share the burden of housing our city's unfortunate poor and needy with neighborhoods across the five boroughs and to stop placing those in need *only* in Rockaway communities."¹¹

Sandy's Impacts

Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New York City on October 29th, 2012. The storm surge in the Rockaways reached ten feet in some areas, with water from the ocean meeting water from the bay. The storm destroyed over 1,000 structures on the peninsula, and left others without heat and/or with water damage leading to mold in their homes.¹²

In the storm's wake, a plethora of government recovery programs were launched in the area, each of which shaped Edgemere's community composition, built environment, and urban fabric. These included: help for homeowners to repair structurally viable buildings through the NYC/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Rapid Repairs Initiative; infrastructure and public service improvements developed through the NY Rising Community Reconstruction program; resiliency upgrades, buyouts, and relocation through the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations' (HRO) Build-it-Back program; and even more buyouts and land transfers through the NYC Acquisition & Buyout program (see Appendix I - "Post-Sandy Recovery Programs").

¹⁰ NYC Office of Environmental Remediation (NYC OER) Place-Based Brownfield Planning and Hester Street, "Edgemere Queens, Community Brownfield Study," Feb. 11, 2019, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/resilient-edgemere-report.pdf> and NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), "Resilient Edgemere," accessed Mar. 28, 2022, <https://resilientedgemere.com>.

¹¹ NYC Dept. of City Planning, "Queens CD 14 Statement of Community District Needs and Community Budget Requests Fiscal Year 2023," Dec. 2021. [https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https://github.com/NYCPlanning/labs-cd-needs-statements/raw/master//QN%20DNS%20FY%202023/FY2023 Statement QN14.pdf](https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https://github.com/NYCPlanning/labs-cd-needs-statements/raw/master//QN%20DNS%20FY%202023/FY2023%20Statement%20QN14.pdf).

¹² Sydney Pereira, "Eight Years After Sandy Battered The Rockaways, Construction Begins On Six-Mile-Long Resiliency Project," Gothamist, Oct. 30, 2020, <https://gothamist.com/news/eight-years-after-sandy-battered-rockaways-construction-begins-six-mile-long-resiliency-project>.

Of the 3,696 Queens residents who applied for assistance through the Build-it-Back program, 2,494, or 67% had completed construction by the fall of 2021, but only 29% had received reimbursements.¹³ However, the process for working through Build-it-Back was described as, “nearly two years of crushing uncertainty, postponed promises and hopeless bottlenecks that have been the hallmarks of the city’s program to help people rebuild homes... (due to a) process that was over designed and undermanaged.”¹⁴ A 2015 audit by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer found that the HRO failed to monitor contractors adequately, paying out approximately \$6.8 million for incomplete or insufficient work and contributing to major delays in providing benefits.¹⁵

Edgemere was described in 2017 as a place “neglected for decades by the government, its streets lined with vacant lots, its coastline a collection of abandoned piers (where) reminders of the terrible destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy are all around, while boarded-up homes highlight the devastation of the recent Great Recession.”¹⁶ This speaks to the relative failure of recovery programs. One local resident, speaking of his family’s experience, noted how his “parents went to Build-it- Back on day one, to tell them we want to stay here, we want to lift our home, we want to be a part of the community. And then, after two years, all of a sudden, it’s ‘You are going to have to rethink where you have lived for the past 45 years. You are going to have to make another choice.’”¹⁷ Many residents were offered relocation to homes and lots smaller than what they owned. “The original thing was they were going to raise our house. And after a while they said no more, we are not going to raise the house. Then they said they would buy you out for pre-Sandy value. Then they said, no, we don’t want to do that—we will move you somewhere.”¹⁸ These are the types of experiences Edgemere residents have and continue to face in the wake of dangers and unprecedented changes.

Edgemere Today

Edgemere is home to approximately 18,000 residents and occupies approximately 0.95 square miles. Located in Queens Community District 14, it is patrolled by NY Police Department’s 101st Precinct and is part of the NY Board of Education District 27. It has long provided affordable housing options and welcomed immigrants from all over. More than half of the community’s residents are Black and

¹³ NYC Recovery Sandy Funding Tracker, “Build it Back - Sandy Funding,” NYC, 2021, <https://www1.nyc.gov/content/sandytracker/pages/build-it-back>.

¹⁴ Ross Buettner and David W. Chen, “Hurricane Sandy Recovery Program in New York City Was Mired by Its Design,” New York Times, Sept. 4, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/05/nyregion/after-hurricane-sandy-a-rebuilding-program-is-hindered-by-its-own-construction.html>.

¹⁵ Office of the New York City Comptroller, “Comptroller Stringer Audit Of Build It Back Reveals Millions Paid Out For Incomplete Work, Double-Billing & Undocumented Travel Costs,” Mar. 31, 2015, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-audit-of-build-it-back-reveals-millions-paid-out-for-incomplete-work-double-billing-undocumented-travel-costs-2/>.

¹⁶ Nathan Kensinger, “A long-neglected Queens neighborhood grapples with the effects of climate change in NYC: In Edgemere, residents must face the reality of how climate change will reshape the community,” Curbed, Apr. 13, 2017, <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/4/13/15280808/climate-change-queens-edgemere-photo-essay>.

¹⁷ Kensinger, Curbed.

¹⁸ Kensinger, Curbed.

about a third are Latinx. Edgemere is a very youthful community with a median age of 29 and 40% of the population under the age of 18. Half of all households have children.

The median annual household income is \$32,785 for a family of four, compared to \$44,000 in the Rockaways and \$55,000 in NYC. Approximately 36% of the area's population have incomes below the federal poverty rate, and there is a 17% rate of unemployment. Eighty percent of Edgemere households are renters and 21% are homeowners. The majority of renters are housed by the New York City Housing Authority (an estimated 10,000 residents in 3,576 apartments in 60 NYCHA buildings across five Rockaway campuses). There is an annual average property tax of \$957.

Education levels show that 28% of the population have a high school degree or equivalent; 27% an associate degree or some college; and 14% a bachelor's or advanced degree. In a 2019 community planning study, 33% of the population worked in educational services, health care, or social assistance; 16% in retail; 9% in transportation, warehousing, or utilities; 9% in arts, entertainment, recreation, or food services; and 7% in construction.¹⁹

Residents' health is a particular concern. Rockaway and Broad Channel outpace both Queens and New York City for rates of obesity and adult hospitalizations for stroke and asthma.²⁰ COVID-19 has presented an additional stressor; Edgemere/Far Rockaway has been one of the hardest hit communities, with 818.17 deaths per 100,000 people (compared 407.44 deaths per 100,000 in NYC overall).²¹

Edgemere experiences regular "sunny-day" flooding from a lack of adequate stormwater infrastructure and a combination of a high-water table and flat topography. Current (2020) annual coastal flood projections estimate 1-2 feet of flooding in areas closest to Jamaica Bay; by 2055 that figure reaches 3-5 feet throughout the community. Coastal flooding projections for storms into the future are sobering. Current flood projections for a 10% chance of an annual coastal flood event vary between 2-5 feet in parts of Edgemere. 2055 projections for the same chance of an annual coastal flood event estimate 3-5 feet throughout the community.²²

The neighborhood is highly vulnerable to the cascading impacts of sea level rise and flooding. It faces compounding socioeconomic, health, infrastructural, physical, and environmental challenges that predate Hurricane Sandy and were exacerbated by it. It also faces disproportionate exposure to environmental pollution, health stressors, and gentrification pressures. Many residents continue to recover from Sandy both economically and emotionally. According to the New York City Panel on

¹⁹ This information is drawn from the US Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2012-2016 as cited in the Feb. 2019 "Edgemere Queens, NYC Office of Environmental Remediation Place-Based Community Brownfield Planning (Ocean Bay CDC & Hester St) and "Address Report," Onboard Informatics 2017.

²⁰ NYC OER & Hester Street, "Edgemere Queens, Community Brownfield Study," <https://hesterstreet.org/projects/edgemere-brownfield-study/>.

²¹ NYC Health, "COVID-19 Data: Neighborhood Data Profiles," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-neighborhoods.page>.

²² P.M. Orton, et. al., 'A validated tropical-extratropical flood hazard assessment for New York Harbor,' *J. Geophys. Res. Oceans* 121, no. 12 (2016): <https://pubs.giss.nasa.gov/abs/or05000f.html>.

Climate Change’s March 2019 report, Edgemere is in the 99th percentile (the highest) social vulnerability index (SVI) in New York City; SVI is determined along 15 indicators in socioeconomic status, household composition, disability and minority status, language, housing, and transportation.²³

Edgemere and its surrounding neighborhoods are not without community resources. Active local organizations participate in and advocate for the neighborhood. The Edgemere Community Civic Association (ECCA), for example, “strives to foster community pride through healthy, safe, and sustainable living while advocating for the unmet cultural, economic, educational, and environmental needs for the betterment of the Edgemere community and the entire Rockaway Peninsula.”²⁴ The Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation and Ocean Bay Resident Council are active advocates for public housing residents in the area. There is a strong faith community as well, including a number of churches, as well as the Rockaway Islamic Center.

The Edgemere community has a strong connection to parks and open spaces. Many of the **Community Visioning for Edgemere** participants noted Bayswater Park as an important community gathering place, citing the area’s natural features and connection to the water as significant amenities. After Hurricane Sandy, volunteers turned a vacant lot on Beach 45th Street into what is now Edgemere Farm, a site supported by the NYC Parks Department as a volunteer-run farm that produces vegetables, flowers, and herbs. In 2016, residents began organizing around a vacant HPD-owned lot on Beach 43rd Street, which thanks to community advocacy is now The Garden by the Bay, under the jurisdiction of the NYC Parks’ GreenThumb program.²⁵

Edgemere’s Future

A great many changes are anticipated for Edgemere as a result of both government and private interventions (see Appendix II - “Planning & Development in Edgemere”).

USACE plans to fortify the ocean and bay shorelines as a means to mitigate coastal flooding.²⁶ Edgemere will see the installation of natural and nature-based features (NNBFs) such as floodwalls, berms, revetments, and bulkheads along the Jamaica Bay shoreline, as well as upgrades to pump stations and new stormwater outfalls to facilitate drainage.²⁷ This effort dovetails with an additional USACE beach restoration project for dune restoration and the addition of dredged sand and fourteen

²³ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), “Advancing Tools And Methods For Flexible Adaptation Pathways And Science Policy Integration: New York City Panel On Climate Change 2019 Report,” <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/advancing-tools-and-methods-flexible-adaptation-pathways-and-science-policy-integration>.

²⁴ Edgemere Community Civic Association, <https://www.edgemerecivic.org/>.

²⁵ 596 Acres “Living Lots NYC: Edgemere Coalition Community Garden,” <https://livinglotsnyc.org/lot/59126/>.

²⁶ US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), “New York District website Hurricane Risk Reduction Measures coming to the Rockaways,” Apr. 29, 2020, <https://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/Article/2169673/hurricane-risk-reduction-measures-coming-to-the-rockaways/> and Final Rockaway Report, accessed Mar. 28, 2022, <https://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-in-New-York/East-Rockaway-Inlet-to-Rockaway-inlet/>.

²⁷ 2018 public meeting presentation.

stone groin structures to slow beach erosion and offer enhanced flood protection from Beach 92nd to Beach 103rd Streets.²⁸

Additional public projects include the “Greater Rockaway Community & Shoreline Enhancement” plan led by RISE and supported by key city, state, and federal agencies. This project is focused on the restoration of the dunes along the Atlantic shoreline of the Rockaway Peninsula while engaging community stakeholders and leveraging investment to support community development. Key focus areas include business creation, environmental education, equity, flood protection, workforce development, biodiversity, and community stewardship.²⁹

“The Resilient Edgemere Plan,” which aims to create affordable housing opportunities, mitigate flooding, and expand parks and other community amenities in conjunction with coastal protection infrastructure holds the greatest potential impact for this **Community Visioning in Edgemere**. Initiated in 2015, this inter-agency rezoning effort developed a comprehensive plan for new housing, resiliency upgrades, community amenities, and transportation improvements for the area between Beach 35th Street, Rockaway Freeway/Rockaway Beach Boulevard, Beach 50th Street/51st Street, and Jamaica Bay. The plan establishes four new zones:

- “Hazard Mitigation,” in the area of highest flood risk, restricts new development to one- and two-family detached homes;
- “Limited Development,” in the area of moderate flood risk, restricts new development to one- and two-family detached and semi-detached homes;
- A “Mixed-Use Corridor” allows for multi-family, mixed-use development which will include Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) in areas deemed safe for this type of development; and
- An “Infill Zone” which modifies parking requirements in designated commercial corridors as a way to facilitate commercial redevelopment.

At maximum build-out, the “Resilient Edgemere Plan” projects for the development of 1,201 residential units (with up to 456 units or approximately 38% as affordable housing), almost 150,000 square feet of retail space, and as much as 549 new parking spaces in Edgemere.³⁰

The “Edgemere Community Land Trust,” an important component of the “Resilient Edgemere Plan,” follows the proposed zoning framework to develop housing, commercial, and community open-space through the creation of a community land trust (CLT). A CLT is a non-profit ownership model that allows land to be held “in trust” for community needs, outside of the influence of market pressures, so

²⁸ USACE, “Rockaway Project Resumes as Crews Increase Efforts,” Nov. 9. 2020.

²⁹ RISE, “Greater Rockaway Community and Shoreline Enhancement Plan,”

<https://www.riserockaway.org/rise/initiatives/greaterrockaway/>.

³⁰ NYC Environmental Quality Review, “Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) - Resilient Edgemere Community Initiative,” Dec. 18, 2020, <https://a002-cegraccess.nyc.gov/Handlers/ProjectFile.ashx?file=MjAyMVwyMUhQRDAwOVFcZWZzXDIxSFBEMLDA5UV9FQVNfMTIxODIwMjAucGRm0&signature=7e11884f56e26829cb5b2394f9186aa837c77c11>.

that the land can be used to support the community it is accountable to. Many CLTs are used to create affordable housing, though they can also be used for agriculture, commercial development, and community facilities. Because a CLT can separate the ownership of land from the ownership of the buildings on that land, homeowners and businesses have control and security as owners, while the community has a backstop to ensure that when the land changes hands it stays affordable and in community-serving uses.³¹

The Edgemere CLT proposes using 119 city-owned vacant lots in Edgemere with 62 of the lots designated for residential development, 2 for commercial use, and 55 as open-space. CLTs utilize the shared equity model explained above to support community ownership of land in perpetuity, as a way to create permanently affordable housing and other community amenities. CLTs separate the ownership of the land from the ownership of the structures and operate as a non-profit entity that owns the lands. A citywide request for expressions of interest (RFEI) was released in late 2020 to identify individuals and organizations that could create a non-profit entity with operating structure that would not only own the land, but also facilitate construction of one- to two- family homes on the residential sites, manage and program the open space sites, and develop commercial or community facilities.³² At the time of this writing, HPD is still reviewing submissions and has not yet selected the partner organization(s).

Edgemere and its surrounding communities are also slated for a great deal of subsidized and market-rate development that could bring an additional 10,000 units of housing.³³ To the east, as an outcome of rezoning for a 23 block area of downtown Far Rockaway, revitalization plans include infrastructure investments to support local businesses and the development of up to 3,213 units of housing.³⁴ The mixed-income “Downtown Far Rockaway Village” development by Phipps Houses will include 8 buildings in five phases with a total of 1,700 new affordable housing units, as well as new commercial spaces and community facilities.³⁵

On Rockaway Beach Boulevard, near the Beach 44th Street A Train station, “Beach Green Dunes,” an HPD-financed project with developers the Bluestone Organization and L&M Partners, has built 228 units of affordable housing with passive solar design. An additional 138 units of affordable senior housing will be built on Beach Channel Drive between Beach 35th and Beach 36th Streets.³⁶

³¹ Miriam Axel Lute, “Understanding Community Land Trusts,” Shelterforce, Jul. 12, 2021, <https://shelterforce.org/2021/07/12/understanding-community-land-trusts/>.

³² Edgemere Community Land Trust RFEI, Resilient Edgemere, Aug. 3, 2021, <https://resilientedgemere.com/vision-for-a-community-land-trust>.

³³ NYC Planning, Queens Community District 14, Statement of Needs, 2023, https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https://github.com/NYCPlanning/labs-cd-needs-statements/raw/master//QN%20DNS%20FY%202023/FY2023_Statement_QN14.pdf.

³⁴ Downtown Far Rockaway Development Project, “Executive Summary,” https://edc.nyc/sites/default/files/2019-06/16dme010q_feis_00_executive_summary.pdf.

³⁵ Vanessa Londono, “Permits Filed For The Third Phase Of Rockaway Village In Far Rockaway, Queens,” *New York YIMBY*, May 12, 2020 <https://newyorkyimby.com/2020/05/permits-filed-for-the-third-phase-of-rockaway-village-in-far-rockaway-queens.html>.

³⁶ The Bluestone Organization, “Beach Green Dunes,” <http://www.bluestoneorg.com/beach-green-dunes-3-bgdiii/>.

Running along Edgemere Avenue, from Beach 36th Street to Beach 56th Place, the “Arverne East” project will add an expected 1,650 units of housing, including 1,320 affordable units, and approximately 272,000 square feet of commercial and community facility space, including retail, a hotel, a brewery, and office space. The project includes a 35-acre nature preserve and major investments in infrastructure and is expected to phase in over the next 10 years.³⁷

Also in Edgemere, the Peninsula Hospital Redevelopment, known as “Edgemere Commons,” has begun construction of 2,200 affordable housing units with 10% set aside for seniors. Located at the former site of Peninsula Hospital, between Beach Channel Drive, Rockaway Beach Boulevard, Beach 50th Street, and Beach 53rd Street, the 11-building project will include a new supermarket, a playground, and a public plaza. It is expected to be complete in 10 to 15 years.³⁸

Community Engagement

"Edgemere is a place with a unique ecology and social makeup. There are a lot of negative day-to-day experiences, but there is immense potential for turning that around."

- from the “Edgemere Community Portrait” developed November 13, 2021, at Forum 1

The project’s overall engagement strategy built from RISE’s deep and sustained community connections. These included constituencies and leaders working to address issues of environmental justice, affordable housing, economic development, storm protection, and food justice in the Rockaways, thereby supporting the rights of frontline populations and otherwise marginalized communities to speak on their own behalf. In the process of creating a vision for the community, this project also sought to challenge inequitable power dynamics, foster meaningful dialogue, and increase transparency between city and other government entities and the local community.

Groundwork: Research & Organizing

Work began in the spring of 2021 gathering research and updates on the many and varied plans, studies, and initiatives connected to Edgemere. Community outreach and “partnership mapping” situated networks and gathered information that would be used to refine project goals and inform the visioning and design effort. Key stakeholders were identified, including: homeowner, tenant, and block associations and their members, community gardeners and activists, representatives of local social service providers, faith organizations, schools, and day care centers, and local, city, state, and federal government agencies. Scoping interviews ascertained levels of community involvement, proximity to vacant parcels, and key social, economic, and environmental concerns (see Appendix III - “Scoping Interview Questions”). Community members were also asked about any prior experiences

³⁷ Bill Parry, “Developers of Arverne East megaproject in the Rockaways moving forward with first phase,” QNS, Dec. 16, 2021, <https://qns.com/2021/12/arverne-east-megaproject-rockaways-moves-forward/>.

³⁸ Peninsula Hospital Site Redevelopment CEQR No: 18DCP124Q, “Executive Summary,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/applicants/env-review/peninsula-hospital/00-feis.pdf?r=1>.

with planning work, revealing that, after many years of being studied, planned, and programmed, there was significant distrust of “planning” in general as well as concern that their time might be wasted, and their vision ignored. **Community Visioning for Edgemere**, however, was distinguished from these past efforts by the substantial grounding in and support for community leadership so as to align priorities to uplift the Edgemere community rather than to meet only the needs of outsiders and newcomers.

As a supplement to the project’s research, a vacant lot survey conducted by the RISE Shore Corps Youth Program, with assistance from Pratt Graduate Fellow Delaney Morris, produced a complete lot-by-lot assessment of the area’s vacant land identifying how the lots were being used, the percentage coverage and type of vegetation, if the lots were fenced, and indications of stewardship. The project was also supported by a PhD researcher, Veronica Olivotto, focused on social justice dimensions of climate resilience planning who conducted one-on-one interviews with Edgemere residents regarding their experience living amidst widespread land vacancy, their concerns with how best to plan for the lots, and their participation in planning and other community projects.

Community Advisory Committee

The project established a committee of four community advisors to act as “ambassadors for an equitable and inclusive visioning process.” Recognized and respected for their expertise, the project advisors represented diverse interests and groups within Edgemere. With support from the RISE and CCCE project staff, this group met regularly throughout the course of the project to provide direction, review progress, conduct outreach, and plan for community forums. Training in facilitation, conflict resolution, and consensus building was provided for the community advisors. The four community leaders were central to the creation of each Community Visioning & Design Forum: they provided strategies that would best engage diverse community interests, critiqued draft presentations, and evaluated results as they built toward project outcomes. Unlike traditional planning and design visioning, **Community Visioning for Edgemere** aimed for grassroots, community-based input in shaping the process (see Appendix IV - “Community Advisory Letter of Agreement”).

Community Visioning & Design Forums

The community visioning and design work kicked-off in early November with a neighborhood walking tour to survey the vacant land and generate discussion amongst neighbors about their current concerns and desires for future improvement. Meetings were held at the Edgemere Community Farm and Garden by the Bay to learn more about the work and involvement at those important community spaces.

Three Community Visioning & Design Forums held in November 2021 and January and February 2022 provided information on planning and development in Edgemere, including the CLT initiative, generated priorities for interim and long-term uses for the vacant land in the area, and identified potential resources and next steps toward an action plan for the implementation of the community’s vision. Each of these events was publicized in local newspapers and through social media. Door-to-door outreach provided important opportunities to build and strengthen networks. Flyering at key

locations throughout the neighborhood and announcements through schools, libraries, community service organizations, and local houses of worship generated great awareness of the visioning process. Attendance built from 40 participants at the first forum, to 50 participants at the second forum, and 65 at the final forum.³⁹ At the end of each forum, participants were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the vacant land, their interest in engaging in stewardship, how they would like the land to be used, and how well they thought the participatory process at the forum was designed.

In total, approximately 115 people took part in all three forums. About one-third reported living in Edgemere between Beach 42nd Street and Beach 49th Street north of Beach Channel Drive; the rest drawn from neighboring communities. Most of the Edgemere participants were women between the ages of 51-65 who are homeowners and earn more than the median area income. The most represented ethnic group is African American, followed by Hispanic/Latinx, then White, Pacific Islander, and Caribbean. Most lived very close to a vacant lot, less than 5 minutes walking distance, and at least 10 people expressed the desire to take care of a vacant lot, or already do. Preferred activities ranged from outdoor street activities, like dog walking and gardening, to walking and sitting in their yards. When asked what activities are currently missing in summer months, most respondents mentioned sports activities engaging people with the bay and the water (kayaking, swimming, boating), as well as the need to have safe parks, playgrounds, and bike paths. Recreational activities, like cultural events, eateries, and community centers were also mentioned. In winter months, Christmas winter markets and ice-skating rinks were the most desired activities.

The project began on November 13, 2021, with the first Community Visioning & Design Forum held in person at the RISE Building at Beach 59th and Rockaway Beach Boulevard, providing an overview of the **Community Visioning for Edgemere** project. General background and progress updates were provided on the Edgemere CLT and other projects that would impact the community. Participants crafted a ‘portrait’ of Edgemere through the stories of their own lives and connections to the community, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Consensus emerged on the community’s **potential**, while recognizing how the large amount of vacant land contributes to an overall sense of abandonment and neglect. Then, by brainstorming a long list of ideas, participants began to think of how the lots might be utilized in support of overall community wellbeing.

At the second forum, conducted virtually on January 15, 2022, participants returned to organize the diverse ideas generated through the first forum’s brainstorming exercise. Overarching themes of essential community amenities identified at the first forum and presented at the second forum included:

- Food
- Recreation & Exercise
- Beautification
- Economic Development/Generators

³⁹ Participation exceeded the target of 50 participants over the three forums, even as the second two forums switched from in-person to virtual.

- Education
- Arts/Culture/Entertainment

Examples of creative projects and plans from communities facing similar challenges offered a range of possibilities to consider as potential solutions for Edgemere’s vacant parcels. These ranged from fish farming and floating farms to community gardens and fruit orchards and even solar-farms and greenhouses. From the Netherlands came many ideas for adaptive design in low-lying areas inundated by flooding. A variety of place-making initiatives galvanized local artists. Cultural resources spoke to a varied audience interested in activating temporary installations and readily dismantled pop-up structures that could serve educational and economic activities. In Detroit, Michigan, the Fitzgerald Revitalization Project, with infill housing combined with pocket parks, connecting pathways, community gardens, and urban farms provided a comparable model to consider for Edgemere. In conclusion, a virtual walk-through of the site, conducted via Google Earth, initiated the connection of ideas to place by considering the kinds of lots that might support different themes and uses.

The final Community Visioning & Design Forum, held virtually on February 19, 2022, synthesized everything that had been learned and discussed at the preceding forums. Progress was shared regarding the USACE coastal risk reduction project and the Resilient Edgemere and Edgemere CLT initiatives. Three focus groups sessions, organized by theme (excluding Education, which was incorporated across all themes), worked to identify the top priorities for interventions and activities within each theme and then identify the lots best suited for each activity. The final session tasked participants with working together to figure out a game-plan post-visioning for continued working groups, resource allocation for implementation, and organizing to advocate for the vision once the CLT is finalized. Participants were able to select the theme they wanted to be part of at this forum, though that decision does not bind them to working solely on that theme moving forward.

Outcomes & Impact

This past year’s intensive outreach and engagement, community-based participatory research, training, and support for grassroots organizing, small group working sessions, and community-wide forums all served to marshal resources and support the social capital of the people of Edgemere in articulating their vision for the future. Though the project’s timeline has concluded, community members are better able to advocate for their vision. The sense of “agency” that came about over the course of this project has strengthened the community’s capacity to direct and affect change whether it be through the auspices of a community land trust, or through other means of funding and implementing their vision.

Refining Goals & Defining Objectives

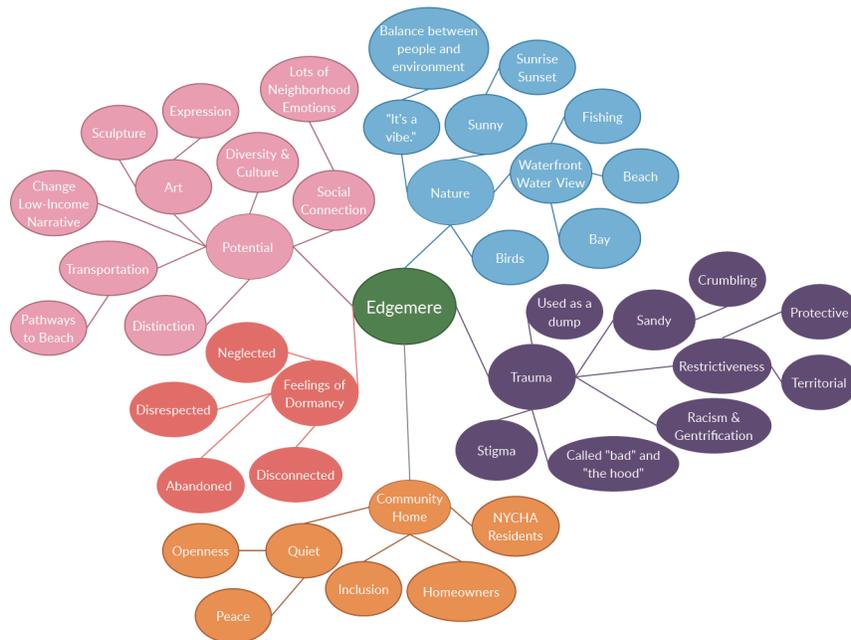
An early outcome, produced through initial groundwork, interviews, and outreach done to identify stakeholders and community leaders, refined the project’s goals and objectives to include:

- Building trust between community members and organizations and between community members themselves;
- Creating economic opportunities in Edgemere;
- Forming community spaces and hubs in the neighborhood that cater to all ages;
- Allowing Edgemere to be self-sufficient through initiatives such as farming;
- Connecting youth residents with nature and the local ecosystem;
- Establishing healthy food options;
- Ensuring safety for residents during natural disasters and other emergencies (and developing specific health services if possible); and
- Engaging local politicians to respond to the neighborhood’s past while ensuring tangible results.

Forum 1: Community Consensus and Brainstorming

Forum 1 focused on introducing the project to participants, helping them get to know one another, and starting the visioning process. A presentation from CCCE’s Meta Brunzema explained the concept of a CLT and how it related to the **Community Visioning for Edgemere** project (see [Presentation – Community Land Trusts](#)).

From activity 1, participant’s storytelling resulted in the Word Web below, a reflection of Edgemere’s self-designed “portrait”:



"Edgemere is a place with a unique ecology and social makeup. There are a lot of negative day-to-day experiences, but there is immense potential for turning that around."

The second activity generated a wide range of ideas in the context of the future use of Edgemere’s vacant lots. These included:

- Farmers’ markets
- Exercise/fitness parks & Street vendors
- Gathering places
- ADA compliant spaces Playgrounds
- Drive in theaters
- Outdoor cafes
- Use of the bay
- Mini golf
- Tennis courts
- Places to BBQ
- Solar panels/farms
- Greenhouses
- Art programs
- Spaces for kids

A wonderful aspect of Community Visioning & Design Forum 1 was the fact that it was in-person. Edgemere residents were excited not only at the prospect of a series of neighborhood-wide working sessions, which are rare in Edgemere, but also for the opportunity to just meet and talk with each other in-person after a long break from in-person activities. Photos from the first forum, courtesy of local photographer Giles Ashford, can be found on the following pages.













Forum 2: Building the “Library of Ideas” & Organizing Priorities

The first activity at Community Visioning & Design Forum 2 was designed to drill down more specifically into residents’ priorities within the identified themes. Word Clouds were used to show prioritization: the more an idea came up in discussions, the bigger it appeared in the Word Cloud. The second forum occurred on Zoom due to the Covid-19 surge in cases due to the Omicron variant. This required a large deal of pivoting by the team and CAC members. In the end, this activity was designed to suit the virtual environment: participants could see ideas/uses get larger in real time as a note taker entered the data into the Word Cloud generator. The Word Clouds for each theme became tools to use in developing the vision. The Word Clouds can be found below.

In addition, a presentation of “possibilities,” prepared by CCCE’s Zehra Kuz, opened-up new thinking about how the vacant land could be utilized in each of the thematic areas. This “library of ideas” ignited excitement and got the creative juices flowing (see [Presentation – Exploring Possibilities](#)).



historicalstation
watersafety
tutoring
afterschoolprograms
education
college
childrensprogramms

trains
boatramp
transportoptions
buses
youth
dock
pier
popupshops
dollarvan
economic
healthfacility
countyfair
citibike
jobs
trolley
foodbusiness
ferry
shuttle
transithub

fruit
youth **food** farmersmarket
hemp ediblegardens mobilestores
cookingclasses
communitygarden
vegetables

growing eateries farmtotable
concessionstands **orchard** cafe basil
foodbusiness farming herbs
native
communitygardesn mint fruits
lavender

gym
recreation adultengagement
countyfair
surfing exercisemachines
fishing

performancespace paddleboating
bikes
kayaking boating
swimming
docks
canoeing

The second activity, a Google Earth “walk through” of the project area, guided participants’ imagination one step further by looking at five lots, each one selected to represent the Edgemere’s vacant land typology:

- a small lot close to two resident homes (lot 95);
- a string of lots that could combined into a larger parcel (lots 81-201);
- a small and more remote lot near the bay (lot 54);
- a medium sized parcel comprising two lots near the bay (lots 36 and 45), and;
- a very small lot on a corner site (lot 44).

A facilitator moved the group through Google Earth, stopping at each lot and noting its context with a 360-degree view. Then, another facilitator brought up a poll, asking residents to vote on Zoom which theme they thought best fit the lot that was stopped at. Participants were also asked to send specific ideas in the chat. The results from the Zoom polls are represented in the chart below, with the specific ideas written below the chart. *To read the chart, here is an example: the number 4 in the top left means that 4 people voted for the Food theme on lot 95.*

Consensus around desired uses and clarification about where those uses might best be situated were among the key outcomes of the second forum.

| Forum 2, Activity 2 - Google Earth Walkthrough - Poll Results | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Lot/Category | 95 | 81-201 | 54 | 36, 45 | 44 | Total |
| Food | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 14 |
| Recreation & Exercise | 1 | 11 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 29 |
| Economic Development/Generators | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Art/Culture/Entertainment | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Beautification | 9 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 22 |
| Education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Others | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Homeowners First Say | 8 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 8 |
| Total | 24 | 24 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 97 |

Lot 95: fitness/play equipment, small vegetable farm, orchard, just keep clean, storage space, basketball court, flower garden, sitting area

Lots 81-201: garden, orchard, exercise equipment/space, playground, parkland, sports field, tennis courts, soccer, track, community center, pavilion for farmer’s market, energy field with food growing, nutritional center, concert shell, greenhouses, skate park

Lot 54: skate park, gardening, water safety, canoeing, seating, food trucks, gathering space, cafe with local products

Lots 36 & 45: outdoor pool, education tent, skate park, marine art/industries, gardening, market, food fairs, small amusement park, bike library or hub w/ solar panels

Lot 44: Sitting/gathering area, orchard, bike rental, canoeing, farm stand, playground

Forum 3: Landing the Vision and Charting the Path Forward

In breakout rooms for each of the project's themes – Food, Recreation/Exercise, Beautification, Economic Development Generators, and Arts/Culture/Entertainment – participants self-selected into the area, or Focus Group, that they were most interested in. The different Focus Groups participated in three different Focus Group Sessions to: one, prioritize the top three ideas within each theme; two, more specifically identify where these ideas could be implemented based on lot characterizes; and three, begin to plan for future work (Focus Group Session III is discussed in “Next Steps for Action”).

For Focus Group Session 1, the groups were focused on the following tasks:

- Evaluating and supplementing as needed the list of possible activities and initiatives created through prior forums;
- Identifying the top three, or most preferred, activities or initiatives for each theme;
- Prioritizing those preferences by how well they met the project's stated goals;
- Evaluating the preferred activities or initiatives according to how well they fostered Edgemere's strengths, mitigated its weaknesses, utilized its opportunities, and tackled its challenges, and;
- Considering the time frame for their implementation from short-term to long-term.

For each theme, the top three activities and initiatives were:

- **Food:** Farmers' Markets & Food Fairs; Growing Saline Resistant Fruits & Plants; Composting
- **Recreation/Exercise:** Multi-Use Facility; Walking Trails; Water Activities
- **Beautification:** Gardens with Seating; Sculpted Bushes & Native Greenery; Paths & Trees
- **Economic Development Generators:** Food Trucks & Vendors; Multi-Use Facility; Micro-Mobility
- **Arts/Culture/Entertainment:** Pop-Ups; Arts Programming; Rental Spaces & Studios

Below, you can find the notes each Focus Group used to come to their decisions in Session 1:

Arts

Focus Group #1 : Identify the top 3 ideas of what people want to do in the lots; which of the ideas on the list would work best.

Top ideas:

- 1- Popupspace
- 2- Programming
- 3- Rental spaces

Further elaboration on these

- 1) Pop-up events – outside – arts & crafts spaces; where artists can work
- 2) Intergenerational art programs
- 3) Inter-cultural programs for art & culture
- 4) Rental spaces (indoors?)
- 5) Programming for arts & crafts & education
- 6) Overlap and want to create art that relates to gardening & recreation
- 7) Want to partner with other places
- 8) Want to have something in the 40s esp. for children

Beautification

WITH PLANTS

♥ Sculpted bushes/native greenery

Planting trees on the shoreline

♥ Trees / Street Tree care

♥ Lower gardens sitting area

Gardens

Access to nature

Cultivation

WITH WATER

Have docks built on beach 43rd street

behind the garden

Rebuild Norton basin side dock

♥ Spaces with views/access to water

♥ Maximize use of scenic views

OTHER BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

Clean-up lots

Care for parkland

Stewardship

Decoration/design

♥ Paths, Landscaping

Outdoor gathering area

♥ Shade with seats

♥ Seating /Sitting area / picnic areas

Temporary structures (for different

kinds of use)

ALL OTHER IDEAS ♥

paths, walking safely

Economic Development/Generators

| PROJECT IDEAS | SHORT TERM (6-15 MONTHS) | MEDIUM TERM (2-3 YEARS) | LONG TERM |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Food trucks/Vendors | X | | |
| 2. Farm stands/pop - store | X | | |
| 3. Multi-use facility (basketball court; co-working space) | | X | |
| 4. Amphitheater for live events or pop-up events | | X | |
| 5. Micro-mobility | | X | |
| 6. Picnic benches | X | | |

Food

FOOD

FARMERS MARKETS

Seasonal or weekly multi-vendor market for local farms and artisans (food, plants, soaps, oils, honey, preserves, etc)

Farm/garden market – single farm/garden
Swap food fairs

EDUCATION

Food education gatherings
Cooking lessons
Nutrition development center

EATING

Outdoor cafes, cafe with local products
Eateries Food fairs
Grab 'n Go fruits and snacks
Concession stands

Food business

Farm to table

BBQ sites

GROWING

Native edible plant gardens

Vegetable Farms

Lavender Mint Herbs



Edible gardens

Hemp

Orchards

Fruit trees and plants

Vegetables

Fresh Direct

Community gardens

ALL OTHER IDEAS?

beehives / polanators
food trucks / pop-up's / pod parks/ food fair

Recreation

★ use existing dock easier...
community boathouse precedent for Kayak group..in Rockaways

RECREATION

jet skiing
phased= short-term to long-term

→ → → **WATER** issues storage of kayaks ♥

★ ♥ ♥ ♥ Paddle boating Kayaking

★ ♥ ♥ ♥ Open canoeing and boating along the bay

★ ♥ ♥ Better safer docks with safety regulations

♥ ★ ♥ Water safety / swimming instruction

♥ ♥ ♥ An outdoor pool hope for short-term

♥ retractable roof pool Swimming, surfing (activities and lessons)

♥ water access at beach 43rd street being explored now ♥ ★

FITNESS

Outside exercise machines

♥ A local gym teach classes

♥ Exercise/fitness parks

Exercise equipment/space

Basketball court or rim

Track

★ Yoga/meditation long term...

♥ multi-use sports facility...gym including turf...basketball volleyball...etc.. ♥ →

→ ♥ precedent - gym in bubble structures...adult education sewing crochet photography adult education knitting painting...currently use of library mt. avenue...air hangar aluminum

Cycling ★ Jogging ★ Walking ♥

PLAY/SPORTS

investors are calling...
pop-up programming...realistic

♥ Children's play areas will take planning...runaround area...

Pod Park – with playground, fields (temporary)

✗ Playgrounds+ activities for children

Sports field

Soccer Football

✗ Skate park → walking trails, (Arverne East will have that) adults, elderly and handicapped...hiking, parks heavily vegetated...

Mini golf →

Tennis courts

Ice skating rink docks on bayside - still there could be used for...kayak, canoes, sailing, boating, water safety....lifeguard resources...

Nice safe parks

ALL OTHER IDEAS

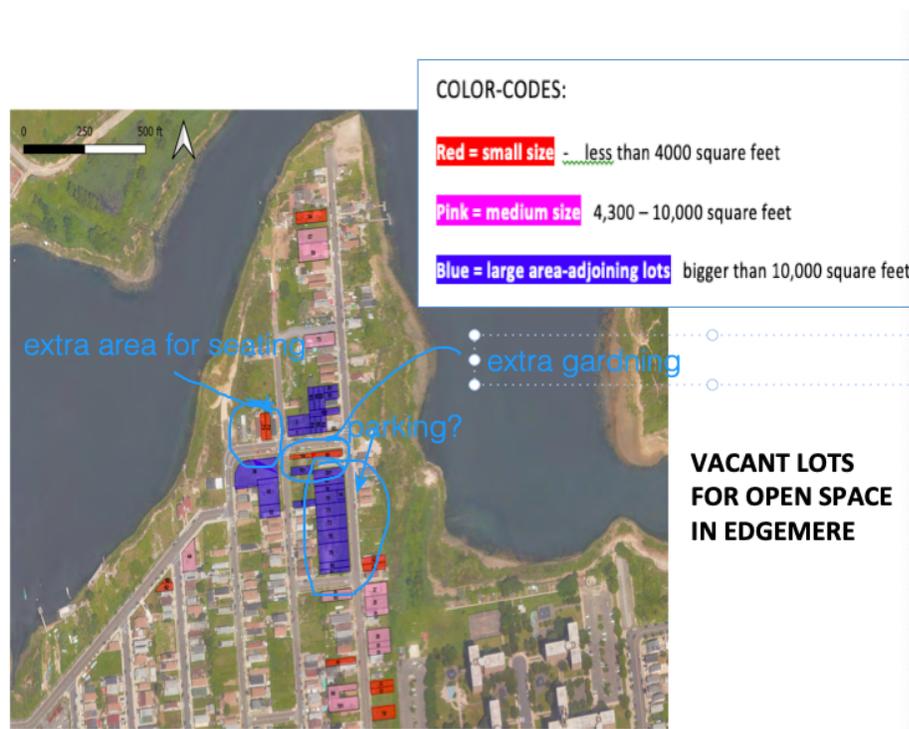
cost-effective solutions...

NYersforParks...helpful resources

The next breakout session sought to “land” these ideas on the map. Participants were asked to consider which lots would best serve the preferred activities by working with a map of the 55 vacant city-owned parcels in the project area. Participants were encouraged to consider the following: connections between thematic areas are natural and prevalent (for example, *every* theme had an economic development aspect); the feasibility of using a lot for a certain activity at different times throughout the year and the use of one lot for multiple activities (from individual seasonal initiatives to year-round programming in comprehensive multi-use facilities); and the physical connections between lots (supporting inter-connectivity of varied uses throughout the community).

The maps each group created to visualize their ideas or the chart they used to organize their thoughts can be found below:

Beautification



Economic Development/Generators

| PROJECT IDEAS | LOT SIZE (small, medium, large) | IDEAL LOT FEATURES | PARAMETERS TO CONSIDER |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. FOOD TRUCK/VENDORS | MEDIUM | Concrete? Levelled lot; no mud (better with stone); covering over stands (see BK bridge park) | Noise; what is attracting people to the vendor (attach other recreational ideas); parking problem; clean-up; attached to multi-use area); create walk-about connecting to other lots |
| 2. MUF (Basketball court) | LARGE | Levelled lot | Noise; can be a draw for food vendors |
| 2.1 MUF (Amphitheater for live events) | MEDIUM/LARGE | | parking problem; clean-up; create residential rules on use |
| 3. MICRO-MOBILITY | SMALL around the LARGER lots on Norton Ave | Sheltered structure; benches; timetable | Can it create economic benefit? |
| Other: Facilities to grow hemp | | | |

Food

| IDEAS | LOT SIZE (small, medium, large) | IDEAL LOT FEATURES | PARAMETERS TO CONSIDER |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. farmers market food fairs | large | streetfront access to transportation parking/loading transportation: central location | proximity to other activities level ground and close to community area with yoga, zumba classes, play ground |
| 2. growing blackberries and other plants prone to saline conditions | smaller lots | access to water | rainwater collection from adjacent properties to meet/augment need for water for irrigation create a new ecology for bees |
| 3. composting | small to medium size lots | | remote locations/ not adjacent to |
| Other? | | | |

Recreation

houses near vacant lots should have an option to purchase them - but not build on them

0 250 500 ft

dock

water access

agree on increased water access, boating, kayak, etc...

multi-use sports & education facility on large lot - possibly in bubble or airplane hangar structure

needs to be near health food (truck)

play areas not playgrounds - far from houses - on smaller lots

COLOR-CODES:

Red = small size - less than 4000 square feet

Pink = medium size 4,300 - 10,000 square feet

Blue = large area-adjoining lots bigger than 10,000 square feet

USACE: Need to coordinate with Parks, HPD and USACE

Advocate for funding from elected officials

VACANT LOTS FOR OPEN SPACE IN EDMERE

Next Steps for Action

What was most clear throughout the project was that the people of Edgemere wanted to **see tangible results, and their participation made them believe that they would.** This is both a measure of the project's success as well as a challenge to support the implementation of this vision. A variety of potential actions to achieve implementation in the future were put forward:

- Reach out to elected officials to present and lobby these ideas to;
- Remain in connect with HPD as they continue the CLT selection process – once the CLT non-profit group is selected, advocate for the vision to their leadership;
- Engage the local business community;
- Create partnerships and join forces with other local community-based organizations and non-profits, perhaps as a way to foster sponsorships (such as from the YMCA);
- Connect with USACE and other the other development projects occurring in Edgemere;
- Research insurance issues, lot remediation techniques, precedents, and allowed uses;
- Foster excitement for the vision through community events on already utilized spaces (such as The Garden by the Bay or Edgemere Farm), exhibitions at RISE, and perhaps fundraisers;
- Identify financial resources and funding for implementation of ideas by individuals and/or community organizations if the CLT project does not come to fruition - CCCE and RISE have put together a resource packet for community members, which includes paths to funding as well as a variety of other helpful items for those who want to continue work on this vision – that packet can be found here; and
- **Continue to support the interests of the Community Advisory Committee and Working Groups by meeting on a consistent basis to share knowledge and new information, update the plan as needed, plan events, and organize action items toward implementation with or without the support of the CLT.**

Though the visioning project timeline is over, Edgemere community members are now better suited to advocate for themselves and to make their vision a reality once final decisions on the CLT are made. RISE and CCCE are *still* here to help, give advice, and offer resources as needed.

In Focus Group Session 3 at forum 3, participants were encouraged to sign-up for Working Groups delineated by theme. Community members can continue to do that [here](#). These Working Groups are meant to continue discussion *and action* on the different themes in the next 6-15 months (the time period defined in this project as *short-term*). While the Community Advisory Committee members have not been able to commit to leading working groups right now, they or anyone can organize working groups sessions at any point. Ebony has committed to leading a form of a Working Group with the women's and men's support groups that already exist at Ocean Bay CDC. Working Groups may continue to be facilitated and supported in a potential Phase 2 of **Community Visioning for Edgemere**, which will focus specifically on implementation of the vision. Participants were also encouraged in each group came up with their own ideas for moving toward implementation through Next Steps and Action Plan items. These can be seen below:

Arts

Spaces and Action:

Pop-ups can be united to events –how this should be delivered:

(Are these sustainable? Can they be done in the short term (6-15 months)☺)

Limitations on outdoor pop-ups = seasonal. So what would happen in the winter. Is there a way to continue the programming and have the artists have access to space and INTEGRATE WITH EDUCATION

MODELING IMPORTANT – show people what is possible; artists living in Edgemere want to show the community “look, you can do this!”.

Also arts events happening in the winter (eg. Mica dance performance on the beach)

PROGRAMMING NEEDS TO BE MORE INTENTIONAL – events need to be calendered; volunteers need to be scheduled through the year; announcements need to be done; tie to workshops and classes; classify via age bracket (this is a vision for a year round, programmed, organic/volunteer-based but supported, year round arts and education program that is supported with outreach and probably needs some funding)

Rentals: Can shipping containers be used in the short term? Marina 59 has a lot of shipping containers already being rented by artists for studio space; maybe RISE could connect with Marina 59 around this idea. (would this area flood?). Shipping containers can be put on top of concrete block; often used in temp installations.

Shipping containers are heavy and have to be brought on a flatbed truck. INSTEAD USE THE RESOURCES OF THE DESIGNERS TO IMAGINE AND DESIGN A TEMPORAL STRUCTURE THAT CAN BE ASSEMBLED WITH HEATING – ALSO THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING A BATHROOM.

Structures need to be sustainable; withstand flooding.

Discussion with pop-up events; rentals and PROGRAMMING AND PROMOTING ARTS EVENTS THAT ARE ALSO CONNECTED TO ARTS & CRAFTS AND INTER-GENERATIONAL EDUCATION. A NEW IDEA that was developed.

group of artists working in the area; APPLYING FOR GRANTS TO WORK IN “GARDEN-SCAPES” TO DO INTER-CULTURAL PROGRAMS (E.G. SCULPTURE)

Who is the community to be served? We will need to serve and target: Demographic actually very young (majority of pop early to mid 20s); against impression that pop is aging. Many children in the community.

Beautification

BEAUTIFICATION – IDEAS, SPACES, ACTION

| IDEAS | LOT SIZE | IDEAL LOT FEATURES | PARAMETERS TO CONSIDER |
|--|---|--|---|
| 0. Clean-ups – this is the first step | All | N/A | What equipment and volunteers are needed? Available resources (e.g. Wildcat Services)? Who might we partner with around shared interests? |
| 1. Multi-use “Pavilion Park” – (detailed design presented by participant, Michael Connor) - with central pavilion, areas for seating, picnics, plants, and sports. | Large – ideally the middle blue connected lots grouping And small adjoining lots for parking | Large space with access on several sides, providing distinct areas for different activities. | Include surrounding homeowners in plans, so their concerns are addressed. Check for restrictions on potential uses. Consider how this urban park would relate to other projects underway. |
| 2. Pathways, walking trails with landscaping and plantings | Interconnected spaces and features | | Connections to existing and new gardens and maybe waterfront access |
| 3A. Gardens with bushes, flowers, trees, shade seating 3B. Playgrounds for children | Small | Space for seating with views Space for equipment and activity | Connections /access for use by neighborhood groups Safety Noise |

Economic Development/Generators

| PROJECT IDEAS | WHO (will be involved?) | WHAT (do we plan to do?) | HOW (what else would we need to know? (e.g. regulations, business concepts, relevant models to draw from)) |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. FOOD TRUCK/VENDORS | C&C Jerkbox Food Truck on Beach 59 th Check city list of food trucks in Far Rock Leverage contacts of existing CBOs | Movie nights at garden by the bay Advertise in Edgemere/Far Rock zip codes | Matching with MUF; liability insurance; certifications; pilots close to RISE/subway station; lot remediation to deal with issues with mosquitoes/bees/stale water) |
| 2. MUF (Basketball court) 2.1 MUF (Amphitheater for live events) | Far Rock Strong; NY Skyriders - non-profit organization operating in Edgemere/Far Rock for many years... | | Get YMCA to sponsor extension; lot remediation to deal with issues with mosquitoes/bees Get existing event spaces to sponsor outdoor extension; lot remediation |
| 3. MICRO-MOBILITY | | | Residents may be willing to pay |

PARAMETERS TO CONSIDER

- lobby elected officials - yes
- create partnerships - other non-profits... combine resources
- financial + resources are important
- volunteers??? ask people in community
- local businesses financial or expertise...manpower...creative and skills...
- need to understand what is a temporary structure...what is permitted...permeable...
- bubble structures... need to know more...
- walking trails, do we have a model? need to connect to ARMY CORPS...HPD, PARKS...shoreline will look different...Keep in touch
- see how these lots are connected...

RISE and CCCE thanks The Nature Conservancy for their funding and all their support during this project.

Over the past 6 months, community members of Edgemere have created a dynamic vision of their neighborhood as new developments begin to take place. Together, we can ensure Edgemere's bright, safe, and long-lasting future.

Appendix I - Post-Sandy Recovery Programs

- **Rapid Repairs Initiative:** This partnership between the Bloomberg administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided emergency repair services, such as restoration of heat, power, and hot water, and/or limited repairs to prevent further damage, allowing homeowners whose homes were deemed structurally sound to stay in their homes. This program was available for the first year after Sandy and served approximately 11,700 homes citywide
- **Build it Back Housing Recovery Program:** Led by the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations (HRO), Build it Back consisted of three programs: Single-Family, Multi-Family, and Temporary Disaster Assistance, which connected homeowners who experienced more severe damage with funding and contractors to assist with rebuilding and elevation, repairs, resiliency upgrades, and in some cases, buyouts, and relocation assistance. It also provided rental assistance for displaced low-income households.
- **NYC Acquisition & Buyout Program:** About 126 homeowners in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island opted for a buyout, and the City ultimately pursued one of three options for these sites:
 - ◆ Lots adjacent to existing Parks Department land, including four in Edgemere, were transferred to the Parks Department;
 - ◆ Lots not adjacent to parkland but not deemed suitable for redevelopment due to flood risk, including four in Edgemere, were transferred to the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) for use as permanent open-space (or in the case of a Broad Channel pilot program sold to neighboring homeowners with the caveat that the lot must not be built on); and
 - ◆ Lots deemed eligible for housing redevelopment were either sold at auction or included in a Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) Request for Proposals for affordable housing development (4 lots in Edgemere deemed suitable for housing redevelopment were not included in the RFP since they are part of the **Resilient Edgemere Plan** - see below).
- **NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program:** The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) allotted funds to community-based recovery and resiliency project proposals focused on infrastructure and public services. In Edgemere, NY Rising supported a pilot program by the Center for New York City Neighborhoods to provide technical assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners for building audits, resiliency retrofits, and financing.

Appendix II - Planning & Development in Edgemere

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) East Rockaway Inlet to Rockaway Inlet and Jamaica Bay Coastal Storm Risk Reduction Project

Focused on installing nature-based and gray infrastructure features to reduce coastal flooding, this massive federal project, finalized in 2018, consists of \$600 million in federal investment to fortify the ocean and bay shorelines. In Edgemere specifically, this will involve installation of natural and nature-based features (NNBFs) such as floodwalls, berms, revetments, and bulkheads along the Jamaica Bay shoreline, as well as upgrades to pump stations and new stormwater outfalls to facilitate drainage. It dovetails with the **USACE Beach Restoration Plan**, to restore Rockaway Beach between Beach 92nd Street and Beach 103rd Street using dredged sand. In November 2020, USACE awarded a \$113.9 million contract for installation of 14 stone groin structures meant to slow beach erosion, to be followed by restoration of the sand dunes that will offer enhanced flood protection.

The Resilient Edgemere Plan

“Resilient Edgemere” is an inter-agency effort led by NYC HPD for a large rezoning of the neighborhood intended to mitigate long term flood risk, create affordable housing opportunities, and expand neighborhood amenities alongside investments in coastal protection infrastructure and parks. Beginning in 2015, HPD led an 18-month community engagement process to inform a comprehensive plan for the neighborhood, including new housing development, resiliency upgrades, community amenities, and transportation improvements. The Department of City Planning (DCP) certified the plan’s zoning and land use components into the public review process on December 13, 2021. The plan focuses on the area between Beach 35th Street, Rockaway Freeway/Rockaway Beach Boulevard, Beach 50th Street/51st Street, and Jamaica Bay. It divides the area into four zones:

- Hazard Mitigation Zone: restricts new development or limits it to only one- and two-family detached homes in the area of highest flood risk;
- Limited Development Zone: restricts new development to one- and two-family detached and semi-detached homes in the area of moderate flood risk;
- Mixed-Use Corridor: Allows for multi-family, mixed-use development which will include Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) in areas deemed safe for this type of development; and
- Infill Zone: Slightly changes commercial zoning along corridors to reduce the parking requirement to facilitate commercial redevelopment.

Altogether, the environmental review documents for this proposal note that at maximum build-out, this plan could bring as many as 1,201 residential units (including up to 456 affordable units), 144,359 square feet of retail space, and approximately 549 new parking spaces to Edgemere.

Edgemere Community Land Trust

This component of the “Resilient Edgemere” plan proposes the redevelopment of city-owned vacant land via a community land trust (CLT) model of ownership. In summer of 2021, HPD released a

Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI), inviting both local and citywide organizations to apply. The CLT could potentially acquire 119 lots in Edgemere from the City, including 62 slated for residential development, 55 intended for open space, and 2 designated for commercial use. The RFEI asked respondents to outline a CLT operating structure that would not only own land, but also facilitate construction of one- to two- family homes on the residential sites, manage and program the open space sites, and develop commercial or community facilities. At the time of this writing, HPD is still reviewing submissions and has not yet selected the partner organization(s).

Downtown Far Rockaway Rezoning and Associated Developments

In September 2017, the City approved a rezoning plan for a 23-block area of Downtown Far Rockaway, located to Edgemere's east. This plan focused on revitalizing the area, including the development of a major infrastructure investment (phase 1 was completed in August 2021, phase 2 is now underway), public realm improvements, support for local businesses, and the addition of mixed-income housing. The environmental review estimated the rezoning could spur development of up to 3,123 new units of housing, and development has been occurring rapidly since approval of the rezoning. In January 2020, HPD announced that they had provided financing for over 1,380 affordable apartments since 2017. One of the major projects is Downtown Far Rockaway Village, a development from Phipps Houses, which will include 8 buildings in five phases with a total of 1,700 new affordable housing units, as well as new commercial spaces and community facilities.

Beach Green Dunes

This 100% affordable project financed by HPD and developed by the Bluestone Organization and L&M Partners has three phases. Phases 1 & 2 are located on Rockaway Beach Boulevard next to the Beach 44th Street A Train station. These are complete and include 228 total units of affordable housing designed to passive house standards. Phase 3, on Beach Channel Drive between Beach 35th Street and Beach 36th Street, will add another 138 affordable units, including 31 specifically for seniors.

Arverne East

This large-scale site sits on the south of Edgemere, across Edgemere Avenue from Beach 36th Street to Beach 56th Place. The 10-year, phased project closed on its first phase, including a 35-acre nature preserve, in December 2021. The full project is expected to include 1,650 units of housing, including 1,320 affordable units with affordable home ownership opportunities, and approximately 272,000 square feet of commercial and community facility space, including retail, a hotel, a brewery, and office space. This requires a major investment in infrastructure including sidewalks, sewers, electric connections, water mains, and green infrastructure.

Peninsula Hospital Redevelopment (“Edgemere Commons”)

In November 2019, the City approved Arker Companies' redevelopment plan for the former site of Peninsula Hospital, between Beach Channel Drive, Rockaway Beach Boulevard, Beach 50th Street, and Beach 53rd Street. The multi-phase project's first phase is now under construction, and the developers say it will take 10-15 years to complete. The plan includes 2,200 units of affordable housing (including 201 specifically for seniors) in 11 buildings, as well as commercial and community facility space including a new supermarket, a playground, and a public plaza.

Greater Rockaway Community & Shoreline Enhancement:

This plan, led by RISE, focuses on the restoration of the dunes along the Atlantic shoreline of the Rockaway Peninsula. It prioritizes local voices, biodiversity, and long-term stewardship. In 2020 and 2021, RISE and partner organizations undertook a community-based design process to inform the creation of a plan to supplement USACE's beach restoration work through community stewardship, education, and green job programs for youth. In November 2021, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) awarded RISE a grant through their National Coastal Resilience Fund, the only one of these grants awarded in New York State, to complete this work.

Enabling Rockaway Homeowners to Prepare for Coastal Flooding

This project is engaging over a dozen local civic associations, community groups, and faith-based organizations to empower local residents to adapt their homes.

NYC DOT and HPD Access to Opportunity Transportation and Housing Study for the Eastern Rockaways

In 2015, the NYC Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) received a US DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant focused on improving connections to jobs, education, healthcare, and services. They conducted community outreach from 2015-2017, and in 2019 released a report outlining a five-year plan for improvements, including upgrades to infrastructure for driving, walking, cycling, and accessing public transit. The Rockaway Freeway and Seagirt Boulevard bike route is an example of a recommendation from this plan that is in the implementation phase.

OER Brownfield Report

In February of 2019, the NYC Office of Environmental Remediation released a report with Ocean Bay CDC and consultants Hester Street offering community-sourced recommendations for improving health and economic opportunity on the peninsula. The report's main recommendation centers on developing a kitchen incubator, to be located on Beach Channel Drive, which would provide job training and support local food entrepreneurs.

Appendix III - Scoping Interview Questions

Before the Interview

1. Make a copy of this Google Doc and rename it.
2. You can use this document to take notes in.

After the Interview:

1. Send thank you
2. Add three top takeaways
3. Add takeaways to SWOT

Interview Info:

- Date/time: June X, 2021, XXAM/PM
- Interviewee:
- Interviewer: (check which one) [] Judah [] Ana [] Delaney

Introduction to the project:

RISE is working in collaboration with the Collective for Community, Culture and Environment, a women’s urban planning collective, to build community capacity and vision for vacant land in Edgemere through January 2021 to support the local community, its gardeners, civic leaders, NYCHA residents, and young people to get involved in the stewardship and planning of open spaces.

The goals for the project are:

- *to initiate a co-creation of a community vision for socially and ecologically equitable use of vacant and/or underdeveloped, flood prone land in the area building off of ongoing and emerging community initiatives;*
- *build relationships across Edgemere with local residents and stakeholders as well as with the city agencies;*
- *grow awareness about “living with water” and city, federal, and local resiliency initiatives to grow community involvement and land stewardship;*
- *provide a forum for deeply community-driven visioning and a wide variety of voice;*
- *and align community priorities and goals and build local capacity for vacant land as HPD undertakes Request for the Expression of Interest for the Edgemere community land trust.*

The initiative is funded by The Nature Conservancy.

Introduction Questions

- What is your name and affiliation?
- What role do you play in Edgemere and how long have you been involved in the local community?

Notes:

Edgemere

- What does community mean to you and what communities are you part of?
- How would you describe Edgemere?

Notes:

Community Goals

- What are your priorities or goals for vacant lots in the area? How about the community overall?
- What do you think are the main social, economic, and environmental issues or concerns facing Edgemere?
- Do you have concerns or ideas about Edgemere food-related needs or assets?
- Are you familiar with the concept of environmental justice? How does it relate to Edgemere?
- What kinds of resources and activities would you like to see organized by/for Edgemere community residents?
- What are your top priorities for new development in Edgemere?

Notes:

Vacant Land

- How would you like to see vacant land in Edgemere used?
- Do you currently live near or steward a vacant parcel of land? If yes, what is the closest address?
- How do you use open space around Edgemere/Rockaways?

Notes:

Building Relationships

- What are your recommendations for building trust and relationships in Edgemere?
- Are there any community challenges/conflicts we should be aware of?
- How about opportunities?
- As we build an inclusive process, is there anyone you'd like to invite into the process?

Notes:

Community Land Trust

- Do you know what a community land trust is?

- If yes, what does a community land trust mean to you?
- Are there any skills or resources around CLTs in which you'd like support or capacity building? Is there anything you'd want to know more about?

Notes:

Involvement in the Project

- What would you like to see come out of the community visioning process?
- Would you be interested in being involved in the project:
 - As a Forum Participant/Attendee
 - By getting the word out to your community about the project as a Community Outreach Liaison
 - As a Forum Facilitator helping to guide the conversation in breakout groups
 - As a Community Advisor help to shape and guide the project
 - In other ways, please specify in what way _____
- How can we support you to be involved in the project?
- Are there any special skills, resources, knowledge, or community contacts you could bring to the project?
- What days/times are best for you to meet? (Currently planning for Thursdays at 6-7pm)

Notes:

Other Planning Efforts

- Are there any planning efforts or community initiatives you've been a part of or know about that we should be aware of in addition to the below list:
 - NYC HPD's Resilient Edgemere?
 - USACE's East Rockaway Inlet to Rockaway Inlet Hurricane Sandy General Reevaluation Study for Coastal Storm Risk Management
 - RISE's Greater Rockaway Community+ Shoreline Enhancement Plan
 - RISE's Enabling Rockaway Owner to Prepare for Coastal Flooding

Notes:

History of Edgemere

- What is in your opinion the most important/pivotal moment in the history of Edgemere?

Notes:

Climate Change

- When you think about climate change and Edgemere, what do you think?
- Do you have experience with storm protection efforts in Edgemere?

Notes:

Top Three Takeaways

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Appendix IV - Community Advisory Letter of Agreement

This letter is intended as an Expression of Intent to participate in the “Community Visioning in Edgemere” project. With funding from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), RISE is working in collaboration with the Collective for Community, Culture, and Environment (CCCE; the Collective) to build capacity and vision for vacant land in Edgemere. This process is intended to support the local community – its gardeners, civic leaders, NYCHA residents, and young people – to build a community vision for socially and ecologically equitable use of vacant and/or underdeveloped, flood prone land in the area. This work builds off ongoing and emerging community initiatives. This letter is in no way legally binding. Instead, it is an informal agreement clearly outlining expectations and participation in the project.

As a participant, I will:

1. Serve as a member of the Community Advisory Committee
 - a. As an advisor on the project, attend 5 community advisory committee meetings focused on exploring in greater depth existing vacant lots in Edgemere and how they can be used in the future. In addition, provide neighborhood context and knowledge to RISE and CCCE as well as feedback on the visioning project process as RISE works with the Edgemere Community at large. Each workshop is a commitment of 1-1.5 hours.
 - i. Thursday, October 21st, 2021 / 6pm-7:30pm / Virtual
 - ii. Thursday, November 18th, 2021/ 6pm-7:30pm / Virtual
 - iii. Thursday, December 16th, 2021 / 6pm-7:30pm / Virtual
 - iv. Thursday, January 20th, 2022 / 6pm-7:30pm / Virtual
 - v. Thursday, February 17th, 2022 / 6pm-7:30pm / Virtual
 - b. For my participation, I will be compensated with \$60 per community advisory committee meeting attended.
2. Serve as a facilitator at the Community Forums, and assist with outreach for these forums
 - a. As a facilitator, attend and help execute 3 community forums exploring how residents want to see vacant lots in Edgemere used. Each forum is a commitment of 1.5-2 hours.
 - i. Saturday, November 13th, 2021 / 10am-12pm / RISE Building
 - ii. Saturday, January 15th, 2022 / 10am-12pm / RISE Building
 - iii. Saturday, February 12th, 2022 / 10am-12pm / RISE Building
 - b. As a facilitator, also participate in 3 facilitator trainings before each of the community forums. Each training is a commitment of 1-1.5 hours. (Virtual or RISE Building TBD)
 - i. Thursday, November 11th, 2021 / 6pm-7:30pm
 - ii. Thursday, January 13th, 2022 / 6pm-7:30pm
 - iii. Thursday, February 9th, 2022 / 6pm-7:30pm
 - c. To get the most out of these community forums, invite residents and local stakeholders in my network to attend these forums. This may include sharing flyers (supplied by RISE), making social media posts, sending email notices, word of mouth, and any other appropriate and useful method of communication to spread the word. This work will proceed on an honor basis, for up to 4.5 hours.

- d. For my participation, I will be compensated with \$50 per hour, up to a maximum of 15 hours.

Overall, as a major participant in the “Community Visioning in Edgemere” project, I will act as an ambassador for an equitable and inclusive visioning process. I will also bring my own best ideas and knowledge to the table to support fair, healthy, and sustainable development in the Edgemere community.

By signing this agreement, I understand that payment will occur twice and only after completion of my agreed upon duties. The first payment will be processed about halfway through the project timeline, around the end of December 2021. The second payment will occur at the close of the project, around the end of February 2022. As long I complete my duties, I will receive half of the agreed upon total on each payment date.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Name

Title

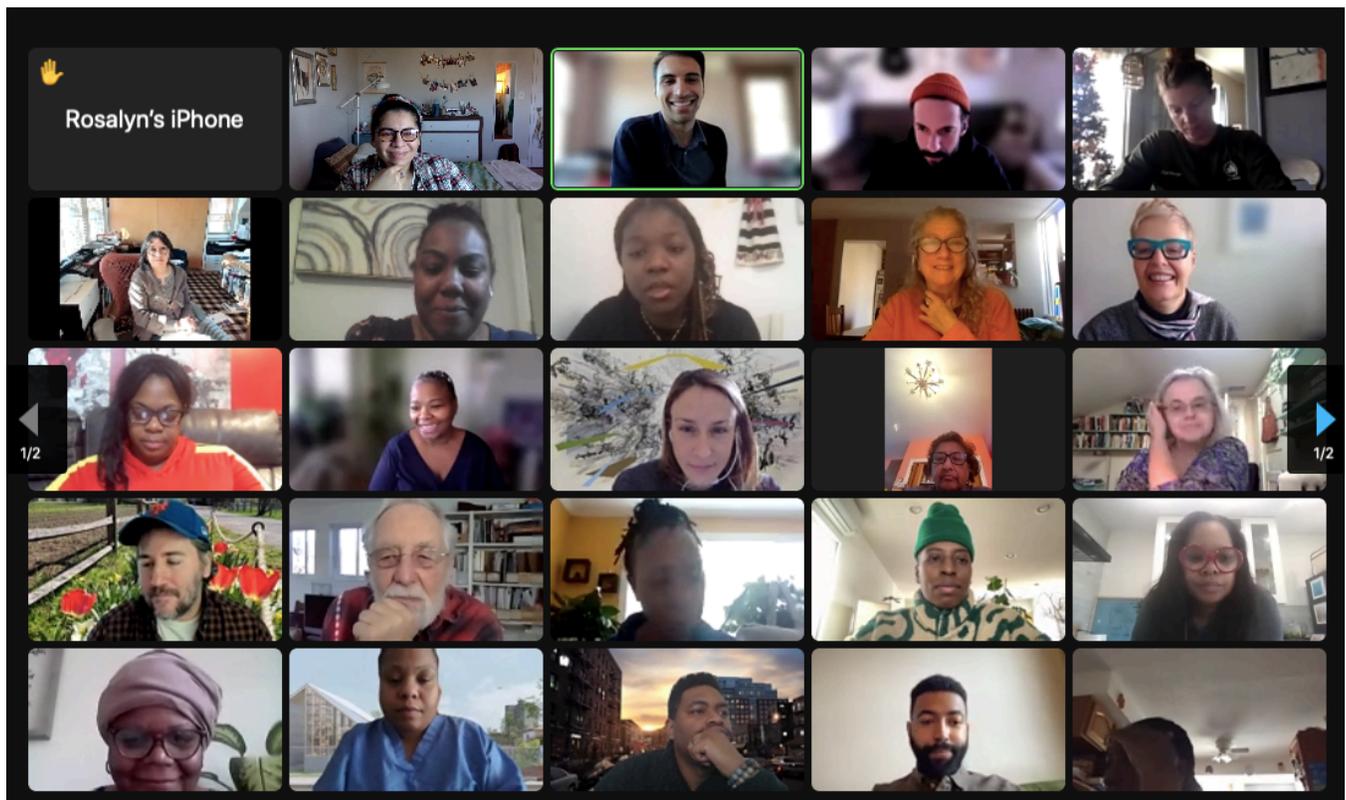
Appendix V – All Forum Materials and Outcomes

For a review of other forum materials and outcomes, please visit the landing page for the project on the RISE website [here](#).

Materials you can find on the landing page include:

- The project flier
- Participant Discussion Packets for all three forums, including maps
- Summary Memos for all three forums, including informative slides
- A sign-up link for **Community Visioning for Edgemere** working groups
- The presentations mentioned earlier in the report on Possibilities and CLTs
- The aforementioned Resource Packet

Since forums 2 and 3 were held virtually on Zoom, they were recorded and uploaded to Vimeo. You can watch [forum 2 here](#) and [forum 3 here](#).



Bibliography

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