



## Sandy Recovery Action Plan Doesn't Commit to Resiliency Planning, Sustainability

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U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan's announcement today that the first \$1.83 billion in HUD Sandy recovery funds has been approved and will be released is welcome news for the many in New Jersey who desperately need these funds in order to rebuild after Hurricane Sandy. However, we remain concerned that insufficient attention is being paid to the need for robust planning for sustainability and longer-term resiliency.

New Jersey Future has tracked closely the state's applications for federal Sandy recovery monies, and has advocated for funds not just for rebuilding and restoration, but also for resiliency planning, so that when the recovery is completed New Jersey has fewer people in harm's way and more measures in place to help it withstand the next major weather event. In our March 19, 2013, [comments on Gov. Christie's proposed Sandy Recovery Action Plan](#), and in a [sign-on letter that we co-authored](#), in which we were joined by a wide range of organizations across New Jersey that are all focused on more equitable and sustainable rebuilding, we highlighted what we saw as insufficient provision for this kind of resiliency planning, and we recommended a variety of action steps. A selection of comments from New Jersey Future and other concerned organizations on Gov. Christie's original plan is [available here](#).

We are disappointed to note that the [revised plan as approved](#) does not address, or provide funds to address, a number of critical future-oriented issues as directed in HUD's federal funding notice. Issues that remain to be dealt with include planning for sea-level rise, identifying optimal places for buy-outs and safer redevelopment, analyzing regional vulnerabilities and developing regional solutions, incorporating green infrastructure to reduce the impacts of flooding, developing county and local hazard mitigation plans, and aligning investments behind a set of resiliency and sustainability principles to give direction and focus to spending decisions.

The revised plan continues to stress coordination at all levels with state regulations, and a new section notes the requirement that the state "examine its goals and objectives to promote sound, sustainable long-term recovery planning that is informed by a post-disaster evaluation and coordinated with other local and regional planning efforts." However, no specific agency or mechanism is tasked with accomplishing this. The only funds for planning in the Action Plan would need to come from the static \$84 million allocated for CDBG administration and planning, and there is no indication that these funds will be used in this way.

While New Jersey continues the rebuilding process, it is imperative that we also plan for a future that includes sea level rise and more severe weather events. To ignore these issues will place people and properties back in harm's way and will constitute an irresponsible waste of public dollars. If an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, then a few dollars spent planning today for the inevitable is worth many times that amount in relief and recovery aid that will need to be spent following the next disaster. We can only hope that the next round of CDBG funding, combined with other federal disaster spending, will address these critical issues – before it is too late.