

Portsmouth Historic Properties Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan
Local Advisory Committee Meeting #5
November 29, 2017
Minutes

The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting began at 10:00am with the following in attendance:
LAC Members: Richard Shea, David Moore, Brian Goetz, Adrienne Harrison, Reagan Rudig, Rodney Rowland, and Eric Spear. Project Team/City Staff: Sam Merrill, Julie LaBranche, Peter Britz and Nick Cracknell

Sam Merrill opened the meeting with a brief review of the flood risk map, cultural values score map, historic value score map, monetary value score map (structure replacement value not including internal features or contents), and the composite score map. He then reviewed the recommended adaptation actions for each of the 16 candidate sites using the new the Story Map platform. The Story Map includes a description of each site, value score and historical significance, building/structural conditions, and possible adaptation actions appropriate for the site and conditions.

LAC members offered the following comments:

- Rodney Rowland described observation of groundwater/sea water seepage in the basement of Strawberry Banke's Drisco House during the November 5-7 King Tide event. He showed a brief video and intends to observe and document flood conditions again for the December 5th highest tide event.
- Voluntary buyout programs lack incentives for property owners to take this action and seem contrary to the goals of historic preservation in the Historic District.
- Public/private partnerships are needed to advance adaptation. Government action can be slow especially when funding/spending money is involved. Need incentives for private investment and cost sharing for implementation of adaptation at the block, neighborhood or larger scales.

Discussion Questions: Collaborative Monitoring

Sam Merrill lead discussion with the LAC about the concept of and feasibility of Collaborative Monitoring.

What are the trigger points?

1. Wet basements? How many? What would be launched when they are found?

Already a need to do wet floodproofing for both surface and groundwater flooding.

Is filling basements a possible adaptation option?

Need strategies to minimize impact to historic value of properties.

Is public involvement needed for monitoring? Will they want to do it? Education about benefits needed.

2. Standing water on important sites? How much? What would be launched when they are found?

Identify flood impacts on structural integrity of buildings.

Use maps of projected flood scenarios for outreach/education. Be consistent about use of "red colors" as highest risk.

3. How is data collection organized? Where does responsibility for tracking and responding to it reside? How would participants be engaged and communicated with over time?

Rather than basement monitoring, install neighborhood groundwater level monitoring wells (done by UNH in the past?).

Strategic selection of monitoring sites (museums, government buildings). Provide monitoring devices for private homes. Use monitoring data for public education/outreach about adaptation need/benefits. Define whether there is a role for researchers to collect data.

Discussion Questions: Planning Recommendations

Julie LaBranche lead discussion with the LAC about draft planning recommendations and regulatory approaches.

1. What are important “triggers” that provide opportunity for adaptation of existing structures? [e.g. exterior modifications, damage, modernization]

Macro-citywide groundwater data and/or flood event data

Micro-level property by property data collection

At building permit stage, provide adaptation information and options

Evaluate code requirements to implement stricter standards; need support from city government not just HDC as the “tip of the spear”

Identify thresholds for adding regulations when necessary (planning board action)

City must lead by example by adapting their own infrastructure and facilities

Update/confirm climate change projections annually to respond to current conditions

Use King Tide and monitoring data to provide rationale for taking action

Need a process to report and record “wet basement” complaints and a way to provide guidance

2. Can collaborative monitoring provide rationale/evidence for regulatory approaches?
YES!

3. What information would incentivize voluntary adaptation actions by property owners?
Revise HDC guidelines document and add guidance/intervention at building permit phase

4. Does property owner education play a role in planning the future of the historic district?
YES!

5. How might adaptation modifications impact the status of historic district and designated properties?
Preferred course of action in the short term – guidance and information sharing, not new regulations

Discussion Questions: Emergency Planning/Preparedness

1. What can the city do to help owners of historic structures be better prepared to address flood impacts?

See discussion under Collaborative Monitoring and Planning Recommendations.

2. In what ways can historic preservation be used as an emergency management tool?

Hazard Mitigation Plan could identify the Historic District as an important city asset. Mitigation strategies would be identified and prioritized that protected assets and resources in the District.

3. Is it feasible for neighborhoods or groups of property owners to pool resources to create emergency preparedness plans or implement collaborative adaptation measures.

Yes, pooling of resources makes sense and would leverage funds and adaptation implementation on a broader scale.

Final LAC comments: Partnerships could be very useful and who will lead climate adaptation moving forward?

The LAC and Project Team did not set a date for LAC meeting #6. A meeting date will be confirmed for January, with HDC as host at a regularly scheduled meeting. The meeting concluded at 12:00pm.