



For Immediate Release

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**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF STORM RECOVERY ANNOUNCES AWARD OF \$3.5 MILLION  
FOR EXCEPTIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PROPOSALS THROUGH NY RISING  
TO THE TOP COMPETITION**

*Developed by Governor Cuomo, the competition aims to foster innovation, encourage collaboration and support the inclusion of vulnerable populations as part of the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program's planning process.*

New York, NY (June 19, 2015) – The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) today awarded \$3.5 million through the NY Rising to the Top Competition— recognizing the exemplary recovery and resiliency efforts of five NY Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) Planning Committees. The winning proposals were developed through Round II of the grassroots NYRCR Program, which concluded with the publication of final NYRCR Plans in March. Each NYRCR Planning Committee had the opportunity to apply for a Rising to the Top award in three categories: Best Regional Collaboration, Best Inclusion of Vulnerable Populations, and Best Use of Green Infrastructure.

Over an eight-month period, the 16 NYRCR Round II storm-impacted communities worked with multi-disciplinary planning teams to formulate actionable strategies that would mitigate the impacts of future extreme weather events. Serving to recognize communities that have gone above and beyond in this planning process, the NY Rising to the Top Competition aims to foster innovation, encourage collaboration, and promote the development of a better, stronger State.

“Through the NY Rising to the Top awards, we can proudly showcase the tremendous ideas and the strong spirit of ingenuity that has come out of the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program,” said Interim Executive Director of GOSR, Lisa Bova-Hiatt. “The winning communities have truly excelled throughout an intensive planning process, and should be enormously proud of the work that has been achieved.”

Established by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in April 2013, the NYRCR Program seeks to empower more than 120 communities affected by Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. Between Rounds I and II of the program, a total of 66 NYRCR Planning Committees (50 Round I Committees and 16 Round II Committees, respectively) have each produced a comprehensive NYRCR Plan and have collectively proposed nearly 700 resiliency projects.

In addition, NYRCR Planning Committees, composed of more than 650 New Yorkers, have held more than 650 Planning Meetings and more than 250 large-scale Public Engagement Events. Funding for both planning and project implementation comes from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program.

The NYRCR Program is now working with local partners to implement recovery and resiliency projects proposed in the NYRCR Plans. In most cases, projects will be implemented by local governments and qualified nonprofit organizations, with support and technical assistance provided by GOSR.

While all Round II communities have been allotted between \$3 and \$12 million for the implementation of eligible projects, NY Rising to the Top recipients will be allotted additional funding to realize elements of their plans.

In all, five winners were selected across three categories.

### **Best Regional Approach - \$1.5 Million Award (\$500,000 for each winning Committee)**

#### **Town of Blooming Grove, City of Middletown, and Town of Wallkill NYRCR Planning Committees**

The winners of the “Best Regional Approach” award were selected based on the degree to which plans, projects, or actions: address trans-boundary regional issues and economic development; build upon sectors identified and priority project in the State’s Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Plan; and promote the development of projects that are beneficial to the region.

The Town of Blooming Grove NYRCR Planning Committee proactively chose to include the Village of South Blooming Grove in its Planning Area, and to engage the neighboring municipality of Washingtonville—a Round I NYRCR Community—in its planning process. The Blooming Grove NYRCR Plan proposes a Master Drainage Study, which is currently being advanced as a joint Blooming Grove/Washingtonville project, that looks beyond town or village borders identify sources of flooding that originate in nearby areas.

Similarly, recognizing the interconnected nature of their recovery and resiliency efforts, the City of Middletown and Town of Wallkill NYRCR Planning Committees both undertook distinct steps to incorporate collaboration into their respective planning processes. Planning Committee members not only attended each other’s meetings, but also held a meeting together to discuss the potential for cooperative projects. As a result, there are examples of shared proposals in both plans, such as an initiative to mitigate flooding in both the commercial core of Wallkill and the high school campus in Middletown.

With recent storms proving that Mother Nature is not constrained by municipal boundaries, these three NYRCR Planning Committees have demonstrated the tremendous value of comprehensive collaboration.

### **Best Inclusion of Vulnerable Populations - \$1 Million Award**

#### **Gravesend and Bensonhurst NYRCR Planning Committee**

The winner of the “Best Inclusion of Vulnerable Populations” award was selected based on the degree to which plans, projects, or actions: demonstrate effective outreach to vulnerable populations, with evidence of inclusion in the planning process; promote the retrofitting of existing buildings that serve vulnerable populations, thereby making them more resilient to flood damage; support the relocation of vulnerable populations in order to avoid storm-related risks; and further the interests of elderly, disabled, minority, low-and-moderate income, or special needs individuals.

With nearly a quarter of its Planning Area comprising individuals with limited English proficiency, the Gravesend and Bensonhurst NYRCR Planning Committee understood the importance of inclusion. Performing targeting outreach to these populations—with Mandarin, Spanish and Russian as the primary languages—the Committee translated flyers, made interpreters available at Public Engagement events,

and surveyed residents and small business owners in several languages. The Planning Committee also held a specific outreach event to engage the Chinese-American business community. Additionally, the Planning Committee's consultant team developed an online Web tool, called the "NYRCR Mapping Gallery", to supplement other avenues of public input and engagement. Project highlights that exemplify the community's strong support for vulnerable populations include the formulation of the Community Disaster Recovery Training and Workforce Development Program, an undertaking that will provide multi-language disaster-recovery workshops for local workers.

### **Best Use of Green Infrastructure - \$1 Million Award**

#### **City of Yonkers NYRCR Planning Committee**

The winner of the "Best Use of Green Infrastructure" award was selected based on the degree to which plans, projects, or actions: incorporate redevelopment of hardened structures using soft engineering approaches; demonstrate reduction in the amount of impervious surface within communities; incorporate strategies that utilize open spaces as retention for increased stormwater; and promote projects that will pursue natural methods for shoreline erosion control or streambank erosion control.

The City of Yonkers NYRCR Planning Committee has devised a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy to transform a two-mile stretch of underutilized land along the Hudson River. Offering a unique opportunity to codify the lessons learned in recent storms, the proposal would create a new neighborhood that exemplifies key sustainability and resiliency principles.

Elements to be explored include replacing impervious surfaces with accessible parkland, creating green roofs, and the development of wetlands. Additionally, the Planning Committee will explore innovative ways to protect a nearby wastewater treatment plant. This project would also complement HUD's Choice Neighborhood Initiative, and other redevelopment efforts being undertaken by the City. Once realized, the vision of the Yonkers NYRCR Planning Committee will have beneficial environmental, social, and economic impacts for the City and its residents.

#### **About GOSR**

Established in June 2013, GOSR coordinates Statewide recovery efforts for Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. Through its NYRCR Program, as well as its NY Rising Housing Recovery, Small Business, and Infrastructure programs, GOSR invests \$4.4 billion made available through HUD's CDBG-DR Program to better prepare New York for future extreme weather events.

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