A LACK OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS COSTS COMMUNITIES

Despite high risks of disruption and displacement in the South Bronx, public investments in neighborhood resilience are limited. As shown by the pandemic, disaster preparedness is lacking, which is costly for communities.

Disaster preparedness reduces these costs by improving the speed and effectiveness of emergency responses, saving lives, reducing suffering and other costs, enhancing local leadership, increasing financial resilience, and decreasing the energy needs of relief actions.

### COSTS TO INDIVIDUALS
- Increased risk of injury, illness, and death
- Stress and mental health impacts
- Reduced access to emergency services, public transit, schools, etc.
- Social disruption
- Increased risk of displacement
- Damages to structures, infrastructure, property
- Time and money spent on cleanup
- Lost wages or business income due to missed work
- Longer commutes due to road closures

### COSTS TO THE PUBLIC
- Decreased economic activity
- Business closures
- Decreased real estate value
- Contamination of water bodies and public spaces
BUILDING ON COMMUNITY STRENGTHS REDUCES RISK

Research shows that community-led and participatory approaches to disaster preparation can improve local resilience and reduce stress by building on community strengths and supporting social cohesion. Partnering with local communities to invest in emergency preparedness can also reduce future recovery costs.

NOS QUEDAMOS SERVES AS A LEADER IN COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

We Stay/Nos Quedamos, a South Bronx-based Community Development Corporation, is building community resilience in the Melrose neighborhoods. Nos Quedamos’ mission is to maintain the health and culture of South Bronx neighborhoods by engaging with the community, transforming existing groups and opportunities, and empowering the area’s marginalized communities to thrive. The organization has brought over $500 million in investment value to the area including affordable housing for more than 4,000 families, infrastructure and broadband access, open space and parks, education and trade programs, environmental health and social justice advocacy.

Nos Quedamos has been providing food relief since 2021, helping to fill gaps in NYC’s response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Similarly, Nos Quedamos’ planned Resilience Hubs will support future disaster preparedness while providing everyday benefits that enhance community well-being and self-determination.

Nos Quedamos work began work in 1992 when New York City proposed the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area, which designated 30 blocks in Melrose to be developed for middle-income New Yorkers. But this site was already home to roughly 6,000 low-income residents. Outraged by the injustice of their displacement, the local community banded together to draft and pass an unprecedented alternative proposal that created the Melrose Commons.
SOLAR CANOPIES AND COMMUNITY GARDENS ARE RESILIENCE HUB ASSETS

Resilience Hubs support residents and coordinate resource distribution and services before, during, and after disruptive events, such as power outages. Hubs are gaining popularity as an effective means of bolstering social and built infrastructures and bridging community and public services to provide rapid community-centered crisis relief.

Nos Quedamos is leading an innovative approach to Resilience Hub planning by enhancing existing community spaces with a low-cost, scalable solution. By providing portable, expandable, and safe areas where residents can gather and organize, they serve a key role in emergency preparedness and response.
Resilience hubs provide risk prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery benefits. Safe, trusted, and familiar location for resource and service provision that reduce the stress and strain on community members and local institutions. Safe, trusted, and familiar location for resource and service provision that reduce the stress and strain on community members and local institutions.

- Reliable public communications centers during the first 72 hours of an emergency
- First responder support and rapid emergency response services
- Reliable electricity during black-outs and brown-outs
- Shade and water during heat waves, and warming stations in the winter

Shelter, water, food, electricity, broadband, and a familiar face

Community events that build social cohesion

Enhancement of community gardens—water, electricity, and broadband for operations and maintenance

Local workforce development in sustainable design, solar power, and stormwater management

Youth programming and STEM education to underrepresented groups

Survey and monitor trends in how community members understand risk

Gather community feedback on crisis management actions and plans

Host trainings and raise awareness (e.g., FEMA’s Community Emergency Response Team program)

Adapted from Peters et al. (2019). Financing Common Goods for Health: Core government functions in health emergency and disaster risk management.
RESILIENCE HUBS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE NYC PLANS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES AND IMPROVE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Resilience Hubs are an increasingly popular, collaborative approach to promoting disaster preparedness and revitalizing communities. Nos Quedamos’ Resilience Hubs can help NYC invest existing available funding more effectively while also helping advance participatory efforts to design effective disaster preparedness programs. Hubs build social cohesion and local capacity, which promotes both local economic development and disaster preparedness. Future interventions should prioritize collaborative, community-centered initiatives such as Resiliency Hubs alongside efforts to address the main components of risk, including natural hazards and community exposures, vulnerabilities, and capacities.

CITATIONS


