

## Moderator Report – Group 1

**Date of Forum:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Location of Forum:** WHYY

**Moderator name(s):** Josh Warner

**Group Description:** (Brief 1-2 paragraph about the group – numbers, make up (demographic, expertise), quality of the deliberation, etc.)

Group 1 consisted of ten participants – 5 male, 5 female. Half of the group members were in their 20s or 30s, while the other half were in their 40s, 50s, or 60s. All participants were Caucasian. There was a wide variety of participants' connections to the Shore, and their expertise or perspectives on the subject. Five participants were currently students or had just graduated, and of these, some either studied or worked on Shore-related projects, or were working towards graduate degrees in policy, preservation, or environmental sciences. The remaining half of the group contained individuals that were born and raised at the Shore, or had long histories of visiting. There was a considerable degree of planning, environmental, architectural, and governmental experience specific to the Jersey Shore in the group, such that deliberation of the three approaches was balanced, yet connected to deeper policy issues or very specific knowledge of locations, habitats, and goings-on of numerous shore areas. Often times the discussion stalled on very specific stories or attributes of the Shore; however, the group was successful in deliberating all approaches and finding common ground around ideal goals, values, and actions related to the Shore.

### **Choice 1: Rebuild**

Most of the conversation around Approach #1 was mixed – that is to say, very little was said by the group that was a clear positive or clear negative of the approach. The first bit of discussion centered around nostalgia, then several points were brought up as having inherent tensions or both positive and negative aspects

- Sense of nostalgia regarding the Shore (this was seen mostly positively, but some participants thought nostalgia might affect political decisions – i.e., people may rush to rebuild exactly how it was without thinking harder/deeper about other approaches).
  - Notalgia considered a legacy
  - Allows us to understand where we've come from
  - Nostalgia / legacies that can be passed to future generations
- Rebuilding Dunes was seen positively by the group
  - The protective element of dunes
  - Barrier Islands move naturally anyway
- The group talked of balance – the need to balance environmental and economic/housing needs
- “The greater good” was brought up regarding rich/elite/private interests vs. communal needs

- “Government clearly has a role” (in this and the other approaches) – but this was discussed neither as a positive or negative. The group treated it as a given.
- Economics of the shore, and more specifically the “place-making” that economic factors often contribute to, was considered important
- The group discussed the tension between long-time and year-round residents vs. vacationers and 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners along the Shore.
  - Depth was added to this topic by a participant bringing up ecological concerns, and how ecology itself is a kind of community. Even year-round residents can be at odds with ecological needs along the Shore.
  - Furthermore, participants mentioned that several Shore communities are wholly dependent on the “2<sup>nd</sup> Home crowd” – sometimes comprising 80% of a community’s population.
    - To not rebuild such communities (under the pretense that year-round residents would receive the most rebuilding aid) would create “instant ghettos” along the Shore.
- A good approach would balance both ecosystems and human habitation
  - Two participants who had grown up on the Shore cited several examples of design elements and ways of living (which were more common in Shore communities 50 or more years ago) that were more in tune or respectful to nature and ecosystems.
- Overall, the group was keen that the underlying value / impetus represented by the first Approach was one of “immediacy.”
  - Taxes and a tax base are necessary for rebuilding and thriving
  - Public services – some of which are critical – depend on taxes, which in turn depend highly on rebuilding (quickly).

#### Disagreements with Approach #1

- This tendency toward “immediacy” often prevents or impedes thinking. Longer-term thinking and goals that might be better in the long run for shore communities
- What kind of Shore culture does this approach support? More of the same, super-large houses and rich folks?
- The approach does not mention how private insurance providers are involved and regulated.
- A later discussion of planning and zoning techniques spurred a point that many Shore communities have adopted suburban-style (large lots, large dwellings, etc.) zoning and building codes, rather than more compact urban or shore/ocean specific style codes and zoning.
  - Several participants were adamant that statewide building codes and regulations would need to be addressed before smarter, more ecological styles of residential construction could prevail along the Shore.
- After discussing the “elitist” points written with the third Approach, a discussion emerged that perhaps it is Approach #1 that is truly the most elitist proposal amongst the three.

- Simply rebuilding the Shore the way it was would further segregate and remove the less fortunate (who can't afford such high rebuilding expenses and land/home prices).

## Choice 2: Redesign

### Positive components

- A Regional Master Plan
  - Having many small municipalities leads to fragmentation, which prevents larger cooperation
  - "Mother Nature doesn't adhere to political boundaries"
- The group brought up the NJ Pinelands and NJ Highlands protected areas as potential models
  - A large, protected area could allow for broad protection and collaboration, yet be flexible enough for individual municipalities to assert some independence
  - An overlay district (like in zoning) where adaptable rules are issued for the broad area, allowing for individual municipal interpretation
    - Context is key here: individual flavors/priorities of Shore towns
- Other states have Coastal Zone Management districts
  - Such entities need several "layers" to be effective – state, federal, and local
- Several participants stated that Approach #2 is much more politically palatable than Approach #3
  - However, Approach 2 might be a great starting point to eventually reach or change into the Third Approach.

### Approach #2 Tensions (neither positives nor negatives)

- Balancing public access and views of the shore with private interests/property
  - Issue of where Dune reconstruction takes place
- The "municipal fiefdoms" that can exist from very small, very rich communities
  - Relatively large tax bases and internal politics yields much power and money
    - Such municipalities may be very wary to cooperate regionally, leading to political battles
  - The prospect of consolidations was brought up (of fire districts, school districts, etc.)
    - Potentially tax incentives could be offered as a reason to consolidate
    - But what about Federal and State regulations that supersede municipal or regional control? How would a larger agency deal with these?
- As a State, NJ is torn between NYC and Philly ways of governing and handling public expenditures. "The State is at odds with itself."
- Major tension: "Who is in charge?" "How is it paid for?"
  - Mention of FEMA funding

### Negative components of Approach #2

- Adding extra layer(s) of government

- Needs additional funding and monies to work
- Would regional planning and governance paradoxically just lead to more of the Status Quo?
- If regional plans and codes were based on the premise of Sea Level Rise, it would inherently become a tremendously political process or battle.
  - Huge push-back from private interests
  - Arguments over data and estimates
  - Big, huge disagreements
- Both residential and commercial interests could be dissatisfied with such an approach
  - Large-scale, stakeholder-driven plans take a lot of time to complete
  - Implementation of plans and projects takes even more time
  - Individuals want action now
- If government gets too involved in matters of rebuilding and direction, complications and liability issues may result
  - For instance, managing or regulating certain flood/storm insurance provisions, or regulating which firms or contractors can do what work
    - Private market risks and liabilities

### **Choice 3: Retreat**

#### Positive components to Approach #3

- The Barrier Islands are off-limits
  - Many varied eco-systems in natural areas and barrier islands. Fresh and salt-water life
  - Estuary areas are highly sensitive to pollution. Protecting them makes sense.
  - NJ's Shore and barrier islands have larger importance for the entire East Coast
- Basing preservation on Farmland Preservation models makes sense
  - However, some negative aspects of this include that it is much harder to do along a linear shore, and the sheer cost of some properties would be prohibitive.
- The State, regional and Local coordination necessary for such an approach is a positive
- Since State Parks are free for all, Approach #3 is more accessible and fair to people
- There are some Shore areas that frankly should not be rebuilt

#### Approach #3 Tensions (neither positives nor negatives)

- Some apprehension over abandoning barrier islands that are already built up, and instead moving towns to greenfield or otherwise un-built (but also ecologically sensitive) areas inland.

#### Negative components of Approach #3

- Participants agreed that there is no political will whatsoever to move Approach #3 forward.
- The "elitist" choice, and that much of the public might view it this way

- This approach would drastically impact, alter, and re-shape place-making, and the sense of place for many Shore communities, as well as rural inland communities receiving more growth
- The general discounting or disbelief in the potential danger of future storms by many folks makes this approach harder to sell

### **Common Ground:**

#### Common Ground Actions:

1. Rebuilding Dunes
2. Increasing inter-municipal cooperation (including regional planning)
3. Having a Master Plan for the Shore region that includes flexibility, a broad reach, and enforceability (likely State-driven)

#### Common Ground Ideas, Values, or Goals:

1. Public Agencies should be held accountable for both responsive and responsible rebuilding
  - a. This will include carrots and sticks for municipalities and individual homeowners
  - b. Private Insurance firms should have equal accountability for responsiveness and responsibility
2. Fostering natural habitats is a key value and goal
3. Scientists should work directly with planners to generate solid plans as free as possible from political influences
4. There should be some kinds of strings attached for receiving rebuilding funds, to encourage responsible rebuilding
5. Restoring some of the Shore to a natural state was a common ground goal
6. Federal Aid should not be the only source of rebuilding funding

#### Common Ground Tensions:

1. How do we balance Private Interests with the Public Good in the many cases where these conflict along the Shore?
2. The question of local Residents vs. summer residents vs. tourists: Who gets to rebuild? Who should get benefits? How much?