

Kingston Climate Smart Planning

For use by the Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force

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The City of Kingston has piloted the Climate Smart Planning assessment for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

As part of the Task Force effort, a new tool, Climate Smart Planning was used to evaluate opportunities for Kingston to improve its resilience to climate change. The assessment reviews many long- and short-term aspects of climate preparedness by reviewing city planning documents, activities, and management. Many municipal staff members were engaged in the process of completing the assessment. Initiating a group dialogue around these issues has highlighted the need for further action to prepare for a changing climate. The process involved six interviews and a final group review of the assessment results. The process took just under three months to complete.

Municipal staff engaged in the Climate Smart Planning assessment:

- Mark Brown, Fire Chief
- Sue Cahill, Planning
- Julie Noble, Parks & Recreation
- Steve Noble, Parks & Recreation
- Art Snyder, Emergency Manager for Ulster County
- Gregg Swanzey, Economic Development
- Ralph Swenson, City Engineer
- Egidio Tinti, Police Chief

The task force could consider key opportunities identified in the Climate Smart Planning assessment in its final recommendations to the city

The completed assessment highlights areas of strength and areas of opportunity for the City of Kingston to prepare for climate change and flooding. These areas of opportunity can be used by the task force to craft final recommendations for a flood-resilient Kingston waterfront.

Areas of strength

Kingston's plethora of planning documents shows a commitment to strategic, long-term thinking. Most impressive is Kingston's current effort to update its comprehensive master plan ("2025 Plan") and to address waterfront flooding issues. Relevant plans which have been adapted in the past include:

- City of Kingston Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (1993)
- Kingston Waterfront Development Implementation Plan (1999)

- Climate Action Plan (2012)
- Combined Sewer Overflow Long-term Control Plan (2010)
- Waterfront Brownfield Opportunity Area Study (2010)
- Oil Storage Facilities Study (1981)
- Stormwater Ordinance (2010) and Flood Overlay Zone (2009)

Additionally, the City of Kingston is currently working on the following plans and updates:

- Comprehensive Master Plan (“2025 Plan”)
- Tidal Rondout Creek Watershed Management Plan
- East Strand Street Flooding and Stormwater Management Analysis
- Generic Environmental Impact Statement for Brownfields along the Rondout
- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (update)
- Open Space Plan
- Harbor Management Plan

Areas of opportunity

Although Kingston has been proactive in planning, some important actions are still needed to ensure a flood-resilient future for the city’s Rondout-Hudson waterfront. The following opportunities emerged as a result of the Climate Smart Planning assessment.

Short-term opportunities:

Planning

- Describe coastal hazards and other climate hazards relevant to Kingston and set a goal for flood resilience in the Kingston 2025 Comprehensive Plan and other city plans.
- Incorporate flood risk, flood-mitigation goals, and priorities for climate resilience into departmental requests for capital improvement funds.
- Incorporate findings from the Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force into the Ulster County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (5-year update) the Tidal Rondout Creek Watershed Management Plan and other relevant plans.
- Recommend that Ulster County incorporate climate change impacts into the Ulster County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (5-year update)
- Add sea-level rise as a hazard and add plans for emergency debris removal in the revised Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).
- Consider updating and finalizing the Stormwater Management Plan (2010).
- Use the USGS Rondout stream gauge for real-time emergency-management planning.

Zoning, Building Codes and Regulations

- Revise zoning in Kingston 2025 to address flood risk.

- Evaluate options to reduce the impact of increasing flood insurance rates on the community. Consider participating in the NFIP's Community Rating System to reduce insurance rates for residents and businesses.
- Train staff on the duties of the local administrator of the Flood Hazard Overlay Zone 405-26

Outreach and Collaboration

- Share risk assessments and findings from the Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force with all appropriate officials in Kingston and neighboring communities and with county officials.
- Take advantage of training opportunities from federal, state and local partners to improve staff understanding of tools available to help plan for and respond to flood emergencies.
- Improve public outreach on storm preparedness and flood-mitigation options for families, businesses, institutions, structures and facilities.
- Consider installing more high-water-mark signs in the waterfront area to educate the community about flood risk.

Long-term, important actions:

Planning

- Integrate departmental funding requests into a city-wide Capital Improvement Plan that incorporates and prioritizes the needs of all departments.
- Build on the efforts of the Waterfront Flooding Task Force to conduct risk assessments and develop mitigation priorities for flood-prone areas city-wide.
- Incorporate cost-benefit analyses and long-term flood risk due to sea-level rise and stronger storms into asset design and the prioritization of strategies to manage key assets such as the wastewater treatment plant.
- Identify areas city-wide for fortification, accommodation or relocation of assets in flood-prone areas.
- Support the creation of a new economic development plan or strategy that considers flood risk in the waterfront.
- Support the creation of an organizational framework to conduct preliminary damage assessments following a flood event.

Zoning, Building Codes and Regulations

- Amend municipal code to exceed the state's 2-foot freeboard requirement, pending consultation with the state and local floodplain managers.
- Revise other local building codes to increase flood resilience.
- Require property owners in flood-prone areas to improve flood resilience for new, substantially damaged or substantially improved buildings above the FEMA standard.

Outreach and Collaboration

- Ensure relevant city staff understand the risks of coastal hazards like storm surge and flooding in Kingston.

- Collaborate with other waterfront communities to improve understanding of and information to plan for coastal hazards like sea-level rise and storm surge. Work together to advocate for the federal government to continue to fund the maintenance and operation of the USGS Rondout stream gauge and other stream gauges that provide real-time water-elevation information in flood situations.