



Sustainable Hudson Valley Highlights

2013

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, our work took a new focus on resiliency of communities to withstand unpreventable impacts of climate change and take stronger action to reduce our footprint. While allied organizations scaled up work to help communities prepare for extreme weather, we focused on broader psychological and social capacity to deal with the stresses of a changing climate, including supporting New York's Climate Smart Communities program in the early adopter city of Kingston.

In March, we published **Resilience and Renewal: A Way Forward for Hudson Valley Communities**, a review of actions underway and emerging views on how to preserve and build up the resiliency of communities under the pressures of climate change. We observed that *"the social dimensions of resiliency are as important as the physical, and they are connected. For example, governments surveyed in 2011 cited limited resources and know-how as the primary barriers in their work on adaptation or preparedness."*

In May, we held a regional conference, **Resilience and Renewal**, for over 80 leaders - appropriately enough, at the FDR Library in Hyde Park. The program showcased local models for scaling up participation in sustainability initiatives including climate adaptation as well as mitigation.

We heard from Anders Ferguson (Veris Wealth Partners) about The Oberlin Project,

a breakthrough initiative to make the rust belt city of Oberlin, Ohio at least 90% renewable powered, surround it with a green belt and build local food production. He spoke forcefully, from his experience as an investor. Ambitious, promising projects like this do not happen when risks are avoided, but when investors and collaborators are brought together to consider the overarching risk of climate change and how to rise to the challenges of fighting it.

The themes of collaboration and redefining the playing field were echoed by our second keynote speaker, Randall Solomon, co-director of Sustainable Jersey. SJ is a statewide organization formed by a partnership of foundations, industry and the state, which has created a new playing field for the state's cities, towns and villages to take actions for sustainability and reap rewards including honors and funding. ***"What really makes it work," he said, "is not so much the points or the prizes, but the dynamic quality of governance when communities are able to work together."***

We kept working on local resiliency with a summer session of Placemaking in a Changing Climate, the training that we developed with the Project for Public Spaces. Thirty planning and development professionals gathered to explore ways of making downtowns and neighborhoods more physically resilient and livable. The same strategies that cut down on climate pollution - from dense vibrant downtowns to expanded tree cover - make our communities both comfortable and competitive.

We also discovered a game-changing approach to getting communities involve in sustainability - a model from New England called Solarize. Solarize makes it easier and more affordable for households and businesses alike to go solar, with carefully pre-selected installation firms, group purchasing discounts, and a campaign of education and outreach that runs for a fixed period - typically four months - giving customers enough time to make a good




decision but not to procrastinate. Our Executive Director Melissa Everett came upon this model in Connecticut, where it has been responsible for thousands of home solar installations, and made a commitment to bring it to the Hudson Valley. Executive Director Melissa Everett came upon this model in Connecticut, where it has been responsible for thousands of home solar installations, and made a commitment to bring it to the Hudson Valley.

People

The board welcomed Dr. Lucy Johnson, Professor of Anthropology at Vassar College and a member of the founding steering committee of the Environmental Consortium of Colleges and Universities. While teaching full time, Lucy maintains an unusually full schedule of board and community service.

We were also pleased that John Wackman brought his overflowing energy to our board as a new member. Following a long career in public television and a stint as a massage therapist, John came to the Hudson Valley and promptly met *everybody* by introducing the Repair Café, a community space to bring your beloved but broken objects and get help fixing them.



We established our central HQ at Mainstay Co-Working, a beautiful office complex in Poughkeepsie's Middle Main neighborhood. And soon - Wow! - the daughter of Mainstay's owners - Hannah Karp - became our intern and all-around problem-solver. A 2013 graduate of SUNY Binghamton, Hannah is a writer, organizer, logistics person and willing to learn anything.

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