

Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendations for the
U.S. Gulf Coast Region and Beyond

Report Review Committee Annual Meeting, Feb 5th, 2024

John Ben Soileau

Committee Membership

Janice Barnes (Co-chair)
Climate Adaptation Partners

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Katherine J. Curtis,
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Natalie L. Snider,
University of Maryland

Harriett Festing (*resigned December 2022*),
Anthropocene Alliance

Courtney S. Thomas Tobin,
University of California-Los Angeles



STUDY STATEMENT OF TASK

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will convene an ad hoc committee to conduct ***a study on the movement and relocation of people, infrastructure, and communities away from environmentally high-risk areas, sometimes referred to as managed retreat, in the Gulf Coast region of the United States.*** In particular, the study will focus on understanding and responding to the unique challenges in the face of a changing climate along the Gulf Coast. The study will make findings and recommendations based on information gathered about the challenges, needs, and opportunities associated with managed retreat in the Gulf Coast region.

Study Statement of Task (Workshop Series)

As a way to gather information for the report, three public workshops will be held in the Gulf Coast region. The public workshops will focus on policy/practice considerations, research/data needs, and community engagement strategies.

Elevating community voices will be a centerpiece of the workshops.

Topics to be addressed across the workshops may include:

1. **Identifying considerations and best practices for engaging with communities about managed retreat**
2. **Understanding managed retreat efforts taking place within the Gulf Coast region**
3. **Identifying policy and practical barriers to managed retreat,**
4. **Highlighting key information and data needs and necessary timeframe(s) to plan effectively.**
5. **Identifying research and information gaps, particularly in the social and behavioral sciences.**

Study Statement of Task

(Consensus Report)

Following the completion of the workshop series, the committee will produce a report that:

Synthesizes common themes identified through the public workshop series

Incorporates evidence from the literature in areas such as public participation, communication, governance, and decision-making.

Identifies short- and long-term steps necessary for community stakeholders to plan and implement the movement of people away from high-hazard areas in ways that are equitable, culturally-appropriate, adaptive, and resilient to future regional climate conditions.



Committee Outreach Activities

1. Hybrid workshops in **Houston and Port Arthur, TX**, June 2022
2. Hybrid workshop in **Saint Petersburg, FL**, July 2022
3. Hybrid workshops in **Thibodaux and Houma, LA**, July 2022
4. Virtual Roundtable—Perspectives and Approaches to Property Acquisitions: Challenges and Lessons Learned, December 2022
5. Virtual Focused Discussion—**Mississippi and Alabama Gulf Coast Community Stakeholder Perspectives** on Managed Retreat, March 2023
6. Public Call for Perspectives: Managed Retreat in the U.S. Gulf Coast Region, online submission open to the public from September 26–December 15, 2022.

Committee Workshops



Raised Homes in Houma, LA



Study Context:

Community-driven Relocation and Federal Support

The White House Report on the Impact of Climate Change on Migration (2021).

DOI's *Climate Action Plan (2021)* recognizes relocation as part of a “**whole-of-government approach**” (p. 2).

The White House launched a **Community-Driven Relocation Subcommittee** as part of the White House National Climate Task Force (August 2022). This Interagency Subcommittee is co-led by FEMA and the DOI.

Funding: BRIC, HMGP, FMA

HUD's *Climate Resilience Implementation Guide for Community Driven Relocation (March 2023)* provides a step-by-step guide for communities that want to relocate

White House *National Climate Resilience Framework (Sept 2023)*: Opportunity for action (Obj. 6) aligns with the committee's first 7 recommendations

Chapters

PART 1: INTRODUCING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RELOCATION

1. Introduction

2. The Scale of the Threat

3. Examples of Relocation

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING RELOCATION IN THE GULF REGION

4. Understanding the Gulf Region: Historical Context

5. Current Realities of the Gulf Coast

6. Sustaining Community Well-being: Physical, Mental, and Social Health

7. Communication, Participation, and Knowledge

8. Considerations for Receiving and Originating Communities

PART 3: POLICY, FUNDING, and PLANNING

9. Landscape of Policy, Funding, and Planning

10. Challenges and Opportunities for Policy

11. Recommendations for Community-Driven Relocation Efforts in the Gulf Region and Beyond

“Community-driven Relocation”

The committee recognized the importance of shared decision-making in any policy-supported and institutionalized process of community-driven relocation, meaning:

- The originating community is at the center of decision-making about relocation and needs for well-being;
- policy and material supports are provided for optimally enlarging a community’s option for a safe landing in the receiving community or relocation destination; and
- supports are provided for the receiving community, including land use planning, economic investments and social resilience

CHAPTER 1 (cont.)

Disaster Recovery Model versus Year-Round Support

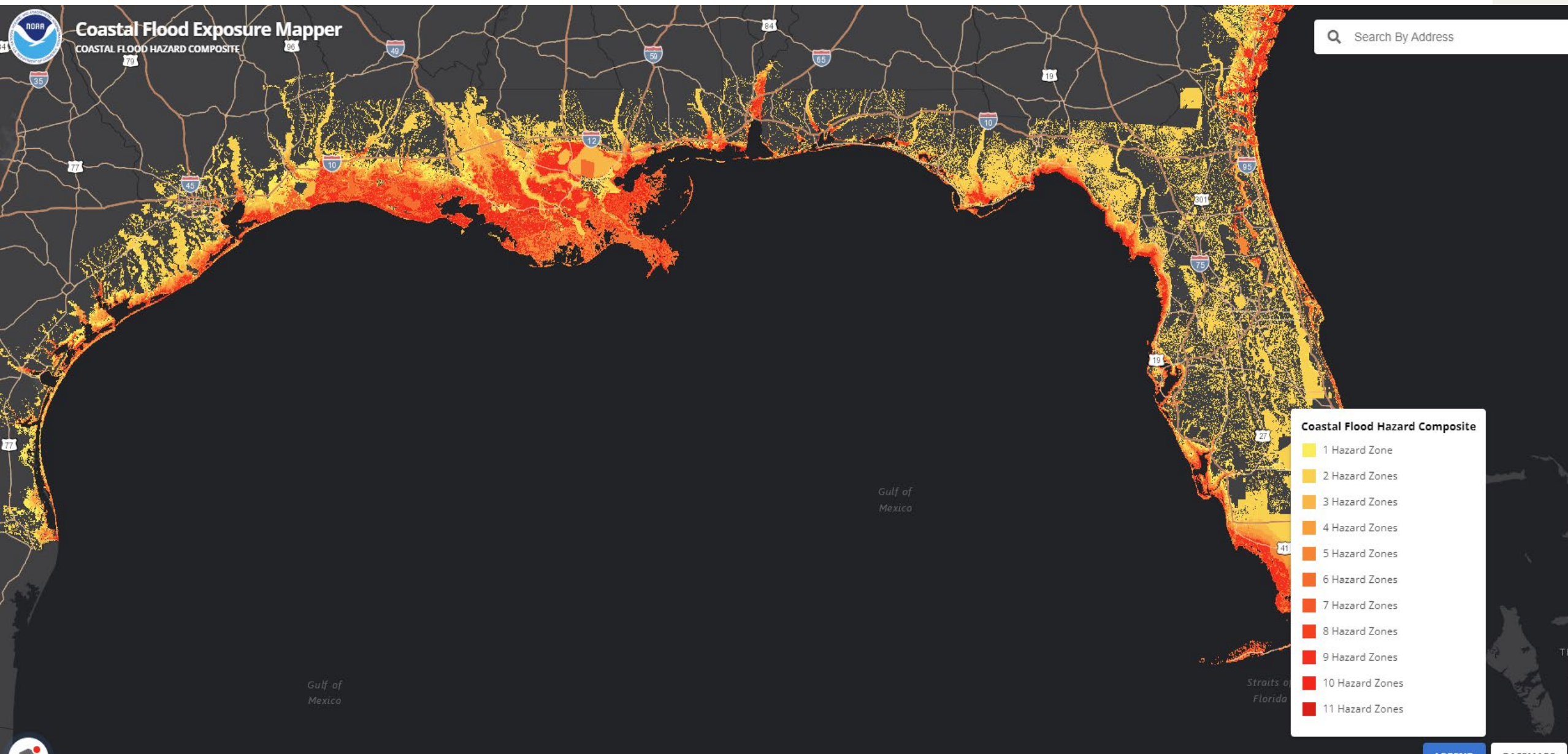
- Relocation planning is currently managed using a “disaster-recovery model” rather than being available year-round and allocated based on risk and need to include addressing the root causes of vulnerability
- Compressed timeframes inhibit effective community engagement, collective decision making, and collaborative planning processes
- Repetitive and/or annual disasters can result in a perpetual cycle of recovery
- **Providing relocation funding, programming, and planning resources regularly would enable at-risk communities to consider relocation as a viable option**

The Scale of the Threat

- The physical environment of the Gulf Coast region and environmental hazards, including climate changes (e.g., rising temperatures, changing precipitation), and human-induced hazards (e.g., petrochemical spills and ongoing fossil fuel extractions)
- Disruptive infrastructure and the industrial impacts on regional flood risk
- Displacement projections and population growth

CHAPTER 2

The Scale of the Threat



Examples of Relocation

- A brief history of community relocation in the United States from the late 1800s to the late 1900s as federal involvement increased
- Challenges, opportunities, and lessons related to buyouts, including those gleaned from forced relocations with eminent domain and from the Dutch Room for the River program
- Case studies of buyout programs and community relocations from the United States and abroad, including in New York and New Jersey, Alaska, Louisiana, Australia, and Japan

Understanding the Gulf Region: Historical Context

- The history of adaptation and movement in the Gulf region, with an emphasis on how people's livelihoods and practices have been affected by the interplay between ecosystems and human-made infrastructure and political systems
- The effect of slavery and post-Reconstruction on migration
- Historical legacies of the region, including, political disenfranchisement, economic injustice, geographic isolation, the role of place, and the preservation of culture

Current Realities of the Gulf Coast

- Gulf Coast region social and economic demographics and associated risks
- In-migration into the Gulf Coast region and Gulf coastal shoreline communities
- Reasons why people live in this region, including place attachment and other economic and social factors
- Brief profiles of six Gulf Coast communities that includes quantitative information from federal agency datasets about flood and other environmental hazards, social vulnerability, health, environmental justice issues, and the impacts of recent tropical cyclones interspersed; the profiles also include community testimonials about these issues

Sustaining Community Well-Being: Physical, Mental and Social Health

- Definitions and frameworks for a holistic approach to well-being, including capacities for subjective well-being and capabilities for action
- Pre-existing, continuous, and new impacts to well-being, including mental health impacts, in the context of climate change and displacement
- Enhancing well-being through task-sharing and nurture effects
- Relocation in the context of social capital and place attachment

Communication, Participation, and Knowledge

- The challenge of communicating the idea of relocation (e.g., terminology, purpose, process, outcomes), including issues of transparency, language, and culture
- Lessons learned from the communication of scientific information around climate change that are relevant to communicating risk in the context of relocation
- Linking social capital to participation, civic leadership, and power-sharing
- Co-production and participatory action research and practice (PARP) as guiding principles for engaging communities about relocation
- Local and Indigenous knowledge in participatory planning, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Receiving and Originating Communities

- Receiving community considerations
 - Characteristics of receiving communities
 - Methods to identify suitable receiving areas
 - Resource needs for receiving communities (e.g., housing, transportation, and ecological services)
- Originating community considerations
 - Planning for when to disinvest
 - How to accommodate financial impacts of population relocations and loss
 - What to do with land left behind
 - Issues related to providing continuing access to land left behind
- Need and potential for partnerships between originating and receiving communities

Landscape of Policy, Funding, and Planning

- Nested scales of government involved with community-driven relocation and the interrelationship of funding, policy, and planning within this framework
- Federal agencies, programs, and policies which dictate or provide funding for elements of community-driven relocation
- State buyout program examples across the United States
- The lack of and need for regional planning for community-driven relocation
- Local level buyout program examples from across the United States and land-use planning for relocation
- Private and public-private funding and programs related to community-driven relocation

Challenges and Opportunities for Policy

- Challenges of the existing approach to community-driven relocation related to
 - Communications and responsibilities (e.g., around buyout programs and environmental hazard risk)
 - The role of insurance in community-driven relocation
 - Household eligibility for existing buyout and relocation-related programs
 - Program complexity, buyout process duration, and post-buyout requirements
 - Economic justice issues including benefit-cost analysis, outdated cost determinations, funding match requirements, and replacement housing costs and safety
- Opportunities for innovations under the existing legal framework related to knowledge sharing and learning, reducing barriers to obtaining grants, addressing cost effectiveness criterion, and more
- Lessons learned from New Zealand and Fiji related to national policies that address relocation



Katrina Before & After: Bay St. Louis, Mississippi
(Credit: NOAA)

Recommendations for the Gulf Region and Beyond

Centering Well-Being

(Recommendation 1)

Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

(Recommendations 2-7)

Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

(Recommendations 8-13)

Recommendations for the Gulf Region and Beyond

- **Centering Well-Being (Recommendation 1)**

- This domain addresses the inherent interconnections between community resilience, climate adaptation, and individual and community well-being. Addressing the traumas, stressors, and dearth of resources, and enhancing individual and collective efficacy are all critical prerequisites to providing a foundation for communities to participate in community-driven relocation projects equitably and effectively. Bolstering individual and organizational capacity for well-being in climate-threatened communities are priorities for public health and climate adaptation across the nation.

- **Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations (Recommendations 2-7)**

- Communication, participation, and engagement are critical elements that need fostering and enhancing among communities at risk/originating communities, receiving communities, government, and other groups whose participation is necessary to the relocation process. Collaboration in support of community-driven relocation necessitates better integration with ongoing planning efforts at federal, state, regional, and local levels, as well as purposeful capacity building for originating and receiving communities.

- **Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation (Recommendations 8-13)**

- Strengthening federal agency preparations include the establishment of hazard mitigation “navigators,” and community resilience/adaptation extension agents, deepening local capacities, improving acquisition payments, reassessing benefit cost analysis (BCA) processes, and streamlining funding and interagency collaborations.

Community Testimonial

Sharon Hanshaw of East Biloxi...found herself on a rooftop during Hurricane Katrina. The next day she became one of the most significant advocates for climate resilience and justice across the Gulf. The...work she took up became very difficult to sustain and ultimately...Sharon at a very young age [had] a stroke, and then another stroke, and then to pass away. She is one example of many of people whose physical and mental health as community caretakers in an inhospitable context of not just natural disasters, but manmade disastrous non-recoveries, living in toxic contamination adjacent to their communities, etc. bear the additional physical and mental assault that this advocacy work entails. So, volunteer caretakers, or otherwise, that are themselves not getting taken care of as they care for others is a worse danger than even sea level rise.

DERRICK EVANS, TURKEY CREEK, MS

**VIRTUAL FOCUSED DISCUSSION: MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA GULF COAST COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES
ON MANAGED RETREAT
MARCH 2023**

Recommendations for Centering Well-Being

Recommendation 1: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE) and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use should support and coordinate efforts across HHS and other agencies with the following objectives:

- Accelerate adoption of task-shared approaches to community mental health care, especially in high-climate impacted areas (e.g., through establishment of payment mechanisms, such as assistance from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and scope expansion of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)). Such approaches should use evidence-supported mental health care, prevention, and promotion methods that community members and community-based organizations can adopt and directly provide.
- Facilitate collaborations among federal agencies, programs, and policies that promote well-being and build community capacity to support mental health, effective empowerment, trust, inclusion, equity, and collective efficacy for adapting to environmental challenges.

Recommendations for Centering Well-Being

Recommendation 1 (cont.):

- Facilitate regional coordination of the array of public health, health care, and social and mental health services, that are required to support the well-being of originating and receiving communities.
- Establish metrics, indicators, and baselines to assess the longitudinal and cross-sectional well-being outcomes of individuals in the context of relocation. These data should be collated with existing data collected by federal agencies (e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)) and evaluated regularly to improve adaptation governance.

Community Testimonial

So, you know, we're trying to not only save our community where we live, but we would like to see something done where we could save, you know, the lands around our cemeteries and our mounds. And they can do this. They can protect us in place, because they build islands in the Gulfs, in open waters. It's just that they're not wanting to protect the coastal lands, you know. The people don't want to move,[...] it'll probably cost more to move everyone than for them to protect us, so why not protect the same place and keep us there? We don't want to move.

ELDER THERESA DARDAR

POINTE-AU-CHIEN INDIAN TRIBE, LAFOURCHE/TERREBONNE PARISH

WORKSHOP 3: COMMUNITY VIABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN COASTAL LOUISIANA

JULY 2022, THIBODAUX, LA.

Recommendations for Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

Recommendation 2: Planning for community-driven relocation should incorporate local perspectives about the histories, impacts, and perceptions of displacements and forced relocations, as well as generational traditions.

- Federal and state agencies (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], United States Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], United States Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA], the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], state historic preservation and cultural resource agencies) should institute systematic, Gulf-wide community-informed local investigations on how past and current patterns of resilience and adaptation and relevant policies influence attitudes and behaviors towards relocation and resettlement.
- Emergency management and disaster recovery agencies (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] and regional and state counterparts), local public works agencies (e.g., water, power, drainage, flood protection), mental and behavioral health care institutes, and transportation planning entities (e.g., local and regional) should reevaluate their plans, expenditures, and strategies to account for discriminatory policies and practices that have exacerbated vulnerabilities, and should institute plans (e.g., Justice40 Initiative) to redress inequities that have undermined the resilience of communities most likely to face relocation.

Community Testimonial

While there are numerous programs available, the lack of trust, knowledge, and accessibility poses a significant challenge. It has been mentioned before that there are no individuals knocking on our doors, offering support. In reality, even if someone were to approach me, I wouldn't trust them. So, we need trusted individuals in the community who can introduce the programs to the community. Then, the community can open up and have access. It's not that we don't have an overwhelming number of programs, but we need to give them access to our community for better use, and trust plays a huge role in that.

ELISEO SANTANA

RESIDENT OF ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

WORKSHOP 2: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION ON FLORIDA'S GULF COAST,

JULY 2022, ST. PETERSBURG, FL

Recommendations for Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

Recommendation 3: Agencies that assist communities with relocation (e.g., Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and state resilience and community development offices) should foster meaningful partnerships to develop and execute relocation plans in collaboration with communities, including decisions about timing and pace of the relocation process. These agencies should:

- Develop a consistent co-creation process and work with each community to establish specific communication requirements that include face-to-face interactions.
- Work with locally trusted community-based organizations to build understanding, trust and enduring relationships with communities to carry out adaptation.

Community Testimonial

I think the social justice component is the other thing that really, we learned a lot after Sandy, which was that a lot of our flood prone areas are more affordable areas. So, this has a very clear, affordable housing tie for us in New Jersey, and it's one thing to make somebody a buyout offer get clear and marketable title and be able to buy the house. But we need to start having real pragmatic conversations about where they can go and what they can do. I think that when housing, especially with the real estate market as sort of robust as it is right now, it's hard to find replacement housing.

COURTNEY WALD-WITTKOPP

BLUE ACRES PROGRAM MANAGER

VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE: PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES TO PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

LEARNED, DECEMBER 2022

Recommendations for Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

Recommendation 4: Regional planning entities alongside local public works, planning, and housing authorities, and departments involved in relocation, resilience, and climate adaption efforts should:

- account for community-driven relocation (originating and receiving communities) in their planning efforts (e.g., land use plans, hazard mitigation plans, and economic plans);
- revise and assess relocation strategies based on current and projected climate data and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).
- conduct land suitability analysis to identify suitable receiving areas, and in doing so, to work with communities to raise their own capacities to understand land suitability.

Community Testimonial

I moved one year, when I was 20, thinking I would love to raise my kids in a new community, I hated it and came back. I came back after a year because I didn't have the community and I wanted it. That's how I want my kids to be. My home was forcibly sold to the county, I moved out on Dec 23rd and it has been vandalized, the county is not coming in to clean it up. The property has a lot of dust in it, people use it to dump things, it's full of trash. I'm sorry for my neighbors who are there. Mr. Sánchez can see my house. He sees garbage, an abandoned home and nothing is being done.

DOLORES MENDOZA

FORMER HARRIS COUNTY, TX RESIDENT

WORKSHOP 1: HOUSTON AND PORT ARTHUR, TX

JUNE 2022

Recommendations for Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

Recommendation 5: Federal Agencies should engage with local governments and regional planning entities to support community-driven relocation planning across originating and receiving communities. Federal and local government collaborations with regional planning entities should:

- work with originating communities to establish threshold agreements for consolidation and regionalization of local governments and tax bases as residents relocate;
- share data about priority receiving communities and assess the impacts of regional population shifts to aid in planning;
- modify federal grant programs (e.g., BRIC, FMA, HMGP), to include making the programming of open space an eligible Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-funded activity; and
- modify federal and other relocation funding guidelines to include a requirement that households relocate outside special flood hazard areas, and in turn, work with communities to broaden understanding of what special flood hazard areas mean to household-level risks.

Community Testimonial

When people immigrate because of natural disasters they tend to come to areas that are already under-resourced. Food and security is a problem in the neighborhood and you add five families, it just gets worse. You could think of all these things as compounding, but I think it's kind of A to B. Very logical in that way that, you know, we're talking about transportation issues. We're talking about things like CO₂ and how that contributes to bigger natural disasters. Well, what happens when you don't have public transportation in an under-resourced neighborhood with now more families who have to drive farther to go to grocery stores, who have to send their kids to different schools because they will want them to do well but those schools don't exist in that neighborhood.

So, all these things work together to create a more unhealthy environment.

JOSEPH AYALA

ASSISTANT PROGRAM MANAGER OF THE CLEO INSTITUTE

WORKSHOP 2: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION ON FLORIDA'S GULF COAST

JULY 2022, ST. PETERSBURG, FL

Recommendations for Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

Recommendation 6: State agencies, regional planning entities, professional associations, and academic-community partnerships (e.g., land and sea grant universities, minority serving institutions) should provide targeted capacity-building and training initiatives to assist state and local governments in planning for community-driven relocation.

Recommendation 7: Federal government agencies, Gulf Coast state governments and regional planning entities should increase investments in preparing receiving communities for new residents (e.g., infrastructure, energy system capacity, broadband, schools, water supply).

Community Testimonial

The time period is so long that we saw a whole bunch of investors come in and buyout the properties and they're not interested in acquisition, they're interested in making money, so they'll keep the properties and sell them to homeowners that are not knowledgeable to the fact their home is in a special flood hazard area. It's been a big challenge the last couple of years trying to purchase those properties before investors come in.

KATHY HOPKINS

MANAGER OF THE FLOOD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE AND STATE FLOOD GRANT PROGRAMS AT THE TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD

**VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE: PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES TO PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED,
DECEMBER 2022**

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 8: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should, outside of a disaster timeframe, pre-approve properties for acquisition (conduct a single National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/National Historic Preservation Act clearance on all such contiguous properties in a flood-prone area) and deem relocation as “cost-effective” in pre-identified communities.

Community Testimonial

[Describing challenges with grants and working with agency program administrators]
Some of these tend to be very bureaucratic and what they know is what is familiar, not what is actually possible. ... Oftentimes [it] is very narrow when ... there's much more potential ... and flexibility than maybe what is ... immediately being communicated.

CHRIS MONFORTON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST, BASED IN OCEAN SPRINGS, MS
VIRTUAL FOCUSED DISCUSSION—MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA GULF COAST COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON
MANAGED RETREAT, MARCH 2023

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 9: In the short-term, federal agencies (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), etc.) should fund application and implementation assistance through the establishment of hazard mitigation “navigators.” The funding and implementation of navigators should be a part of long-term recovery plans and hazard mitigation plans. These “navigators” would:

- provide the technical assistance needed to help communities apply for and implement a relocation strategy (e.g., through collective buyout programs); and
- provide household- and neighborhood-level planning assistance throughout the relocation process.

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 10: Federal agencies that provide relocation funding (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)) should assess the benefits of annual funding to pre-disaster mitigation programs. Actions to improve adaptive capacity should include:

- analyzing regulatory and programmatic barriers for converting pre-disaster mitigation programs to include annualized funding for developing adaptive capacities, including relocation; and
- evaluating potential requirements to transition from a primarily competitive grant-making process to a process that provides on-going assistance to under-resourced communities to develop and implement risk reduction strategies using a distribution formula that prioritizes the highest climate risk areas.

Community Testimonial

If it's a substantial funding amount, there is always a match required, and you know our cities can't pay for the match.

**NICOLE TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY PLANNING, SOUTH AL REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
VIRTUAL FOCUSED DISCUSSION: MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA GULF COAST COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER
PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGED RETREAT, MARCH 2023**

I see all these problems and also see solutions, but bringing it together and making it happen is such a challenge, and all of our cities, I feel, are out there operating as individual communities on their own. . . and a 20 or 25 percent match on a project is a lot—often too much. But it's 20 or 25 of a 100, and making a difference and prioritizing spending that money is just huge. So how can we figure out how to get . . . the 20 percent match needed?

**CASI (KC) CALLAWAY, CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER, MOBILE, AL
VIRTUAL FOCUSED DISCUSSION: MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA GULF COAST COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER
PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGED RETREAT, MARCH 2023**

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 11: Agencies that offer funding for relocation planning, including infrastructure needs (such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)), should streamline the process of obtaining relocation funding, including reimbursements, through the following actions:

In the short term:

- Agencies should coordinate eligibility criteria and timing of requests for proposals.
- Agencies should align the timing of grant delivery and the duration of grants across federal agencies so that applicants have the maximum amount of time to fulfill the grant requirements.
- FEMA should allow people with National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) coverage, whose homes have received a certain level of damage, to apply directly for a buyout rather than going through the State and then FEMA's hazard mitigation program.
- Agencies should allow funds from partnering agencies to be used as matching funds to the main federal source (i.e., the disbursing agency). States should also provide funding matches to communities for grants that require a non-federal partner.

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 11 (cont.)

- The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) should convene agencies to develop a memorandum of understanding to coordinate construction, utility provision, and the environmental review process under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) for relocations at the scale of a neighborhood or larger.
- Agencies should create an inter-agency mechanism, such as a single relocation grant application platform (e.g., The Universal Application for Disaster Survivors), that is accessible by states, tribes, municipalities, and households, and establishes a process to triage the applications and direct them to the most appropriate agency. The process should include step-by-step communication with the applicant for transparency and tracking.

In the longer-term:

- Agencies should develop and maintain, across jurisdictions, an information clearing house connecting users to existing and new resources necessary to conduct a relocation program. This repository should be controlled by an operations center that includes the services of skilled consultants, planners, mediators, and stakeholders, who have experience dealing with diverse interests and navigating issues that arise during cross-stakeholder discussions about relocation.

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 12: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through the leadership and engagement of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), should revise their benefit-cost analysis (BCA) process. This should include:

- developing a rubric that accounts for a community's qualitative values, characteristics, and root causes of vulnerability, such as social cohesion, social capital, political disenfranchisement, linguistic isolation, and collective efficacy, among others; and
- extending FEMA's recent temporary revisions to the cost-benefit analysis for the fiscal 2022 application cycle of Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program (FMA).

Community Testimonial

Since the beginning, we have maintained that we will not sell to Harris County because we knew there were going to be many complications...***They do not want to give enough of what is currently on the market for the properties...we are not receiving sufficient support nor help, they want us to ask for loans.*** Also, because our houses have not been valued at the current market rate, we are receiving an assessment from 2017, which is not benefitting or helping us much.

PERLA GARCIA
RESIDENT OF ALLEN FIELD NEIGHBORHOOD, HOUSTON, TX
WORKSHOP 1: HOUSTON AND PORT ARTHUR, TX
JUNE 2022

Recommendations for Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendation 13: Federal programs involved with community-driven relocation (e.g. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)) should

- increase acquisition payments to property owners so they can afford a comparable home in a safe location;
- provide relocation assistance to renters, and mobile or manufactured homes;
- use management costs to support buyout grant offers to property owners above typical pre-disaster fair market values.

Recommendations for the Gulf Region and Beyond

Centering Well-Being

(Recommendation 1)

Developing and Sustaining Local Collaborations

(Recommendations 2-7)

Strengthening Preparations for Community-Driven Relocation

(Recommendations 8-13)

Community-Driven Relocation

Recommendations for the
U.S. Gulf Coast Region and Beyond

Janice Barnes and Tracie Sempier
Committee Co-Chairs