



Dear Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts and CM Carlina Rivera, CM Keith Powers and CM Margaret Chin:

**The switch to the City's current East Side Coastal Resiliency plan was based on a "Value Engineering Study" cited by Mayor de Blasio's [press release](#) September 28, 2018.**

Despite repeated requests, the study was not made public. In a January 2021 reply to our Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request, NYC's Department of Design and Construction (DDC) stated that there were "no responsive documents" to the City's Value Engineering Study on the East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) plan. However, after an appeal of the FOIL, **this month, the City released a heavily redacted version of the April 2018 [Study](#).**

This demonstrates the lack of transparency and disregard for community. In conjunction with The NYC Group of the Sierra Club's letter dated February 18, 2021 (see attached pdf), **we respectfully ask the Chairman of Resiliency and Waterfronts and Councilmember Carlina Rivera to produce an unredacted copy of the report of the Study and call for an emergency hearing for answers as to why a plan that was six years in the making suddenly scrapped for the present plan that costs twice as much based on a Study that the public is being barred from seeing.** And why wasn't the Study made available in 2019 when the independent analyst hired by Councilmember Carlina Rivera and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer requested it?

Following the devastation of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, the Lower East Side community engaged in extensive planning meetings with Rebuild by Design and NYC agencies to develop a plan to protect more than a mile of coastal parkland and adjacent waterfront communities on Manhattan's Lower East Side. In 2014, this resulted in a design that won \$338 million in federal funding. There were four additional years of planning work, which engaged the local community and the selected architect to refine the vision and design.

In 2018, the Mayor's Office abruptly scrapped this collaborative design and proposed the current ESCR plan; this bait and switch was and remains an outrage to the community. The City's current ESCR plan will have a profound impact on community health as it provides no interim flood protection during the many years of construction and will destroy 57.5 acres of coastal parkland and eliminate the only large outdoor greenspace residents on the Lower East Side have for recreation and wellness. The City's plan includes building an 8 foot seawall along the river, adding nearly a million tons of fill to raise the entire park 8 feet.

The earlier plan proposed to construct rolling hills (a berm) adjacent to the FDR, leaving the coastal parkland as the vibrant, biodiverse and loved park it is, with increased ecological

benefits, such as reinstating wetland areas. The City's plan is almost twice as expensive – \$1.45 billion – and requires unprecedented ecological destruction of the largest municipal park on the Lower East Side without safeguards against increased heat, air quality and climate impact. Inexplicably, the current ESCR plan only addresses a 2.5 ft. sea level rise and will most likely need to add additional feet of fill within a few decades - again destroying all newly planted trees and infrastructure.

The 1.2 mile long East River Park will be turned into a construction zone for many years, during which the Lower East Side and East Village neighborhoods will be completely unprotected from storm surges and flooding. Air quality will be impacted due to construction dust, the million tons of fill, and the loss of 1,000 trees, impacting first and foremost, the residents of NYCHA housing complexes who live directly opposite East River Park.

The ESCR is environmentally racist and creates harm. The only park on the Manhattan waterfront is East River Park in the predominantly low income, BIPOC neighborhood of the Lower East Side. There are ways to gain flood protection and resilience without destroying our community commons, wildlife habitat and the mental and physical health of local residents, during a pandemic, in our crowded working class neighborhood.

During this coronavirus pandemic, New Yorkers need parks to bolster their physical and mental health, and we hope you act with urgency to continue to do that in our neighborhood at East River Park on the Lower East Side.

East River Park ACTION is a grassroots community nonprofit organization with 1,500 people who have signed up to protect this park. We are part of a coalition of grassroots groups that collected a total of more than 15,000 petition signatures requesting city and state officials for a change in plans.

Best wishes,  
East River Park ACTION  
<http://eastriverparkaction.org>