

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Notice of Availability of Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Notice and Public Explanation of a Proposed Activity in a 100-year Floodplain for the Resilient Bridgeport: Rebuild by Design and National Disaster Relief Projects in the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut

SUMMARY: The State of Connecticut's Department of Housing (CTDOH) is the recipient of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) disaster recover grant funding and as the "Responsible Entity" defined by HUD regulations at 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 58.2(a)(7)(i), has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Resilient Bridgeport: National Disaster Resilience and Rebuild by Design projects in Bridgeport, Connecticut (Proposed Action). The disaster recovery grants are under HUD's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) National Disaster Resilience (NDR) and Rebuild by Design (RBD) programs as part of HUD's response to the devastation following Superstorm Sandy. The Proposed Action consists of three projects located within the South End of Bridgeport—the RBD Pilot Project at the Marina Village public housing site, a Flood Risk Reduction Project on the east side of the South End, and a Resilience Center—that together would provide stormwater management, dry evacuation routes (dry egress), a coastal flood defense system, and resiliency education to the community.

The Proposed Action is considered a "major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment"; therefore, it must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). CTDOH has prepared a FEIS in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and HUD's Environmental Review Procedures for Entities Assuming HUD Environmental Responsibilities (24 CFR 58). In addition, the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act establishes environmental policy for the State of Connecticut and requires an Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) for any state action that could affect the natural environment. As such, the FEIS will jointly serve as an EIE and will meet Connecticut Environmental Policy Act requirements. The FEIS includes documentation of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and compliance with Executive Order 11988 (*Floodplain Management*).

This Notice of Availability commences a 30-day comment period to solicit public and agency input on the FEIS through October 7, 2019.

AVAILABILITY OF THE FEIS: Electronic copies of the FEIS are available for public review at the following websites: www.ResilientBridgeport.com and <https://portal.ct.gov/doh/doh/Sandy-Pages/Sandy-Programs/NDRC>. Copies of the FEIS will also be available for review at the following locations during regular business hours:

- Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, CT 06604, (203) 576-7081
- Bridgeport Public Library Main Branch, 925 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT, (203) 576-7400
- Bridgeport Public Library Black Rock Branch, 2705 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, (203) 576-7025
- University of Bridgeport Magnus Wahlstrom Library, 126 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, (203) 576-2388

FEIS: The FEIS includes a detailed project description and describes environmental impacts, including indirect and cumulative environmental impacts, associated with the Proposed Action as well as the No Action Alternative. The Proposed Action was selected as the Preferred Alternative as it is needed to protect residents, property, and infrastructure assets from future storm surge events and chronic flooding during

high-frequency rainfall events. In addition to lowering the risk of chronic and acute flooding in the study area, the Proposed Action is needed to directly protect life, public health, and property in the study area by allowing for dry egress in emergency situations. The Resilient Bridgeport Proposed Action consists of three project components: RBD Pilot Project at the Marina Village public housing site (to provide stormwater management and dry egress); Flood Risk Reduction on the east side consisting of a coastal flood defense system to reduce risk from acute storm events and a combination of natural/green and fortified/gray infrastructure solutions; and a Resilience Center to educate and facilitate increased resiliency within the community. The intended combined effect of these three projects is to create flood resiliency within the study area for its various stakeholders, including residents and businesses, during typical rain events as well as more intense storm events, improving overall health and safety for the area. This would have the added effect of making the area more attractive for private investment.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FEIS identifies several potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action including but not limited to the following: air quality, noise, vibration, traffic, and environmental justice populations associated with the construction of the coastal flood defense system, as well as potential impacts to historic architectural and archaeological resources.

To minimize temporary construction impacts to air quality, mitigation measures and BMPs, such as dust control, use of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel, idling restrictions, and use of best available tailpipe reduction technologies, Tier 3 emissions standard equipment and electrically powered equipment to the extent possible, should be implemented: Noise control measures, such as idling restrictions and requiring impact devices be equipped with acoustically attenuating shields, internal combustion equipment to have mufflers and shield paneling, and debris conveyors and containers to be lined or covered with sound absorbing materials, are recommended to minimize potentially adverse effects in the community: A Historic Resource Construction Protection Plan specific to the Freeman Houses would be developed by CTDOH for review and comment by SHPO. In addition, construction would be limited to daytime.

A Traffic Management Plan would be developed in order to minimize impacts on existing traffic patterns. In order to mitigate potential adverse impacts to traffic during construction of the Proposed Action, the contractor would coordinate with the city of Bridgeport and Connecticut Department of Transportation in order to collaboratively address any traffic concerns.

As outlined in the draft Programmatic Agreement to be signed by CTDOH and the State Historic Preservation Office, adverse effects to historic and archaeological resources would be minimized or mitigated. Project review and consultation will continue through the design process, including design for the entrance to Seaside Park at University Avenue, connection of flood barrier into CTDOT New Haven Line railroad viaduct, and rehabilitation of the Freeman Houses into a Resilience Center. The Programmatic Agreement will be finalized following the comment period and signed prior to the Record of Decision.

In the long-term, environmental justice populations would benefit from the flood risk reduction measures, dry egress, and resiliency education under the Proposed Action.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Any person wishing to comment on the FEIS may do so. The public comment period will be 30 days. Comments and related material must be submitted on or before October 7, 2019. You may submit comments using any one of the following methods:

- (1) Email: info@ResilientBridgeport.com
- (2) Online: www.ResilientBridgeport.com
- (3) Mail: Connecticut Department of Housing (CTDOH) c/o Rebecca French, Director of Resilience, 505 Hudson Street, Hudson, Connecticut, 06106. ATTN: Resilient Bridgeport
- (4) Hand delivery: Same as mail address above, between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FINAL NOTICE AND PUBLIC EXPLANATION OF A PROPOSED ACTIVITY IN A 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN:

This provides notice, pursuant to 24 CFR Part 55, that this proposed federally funded project would be located within the 100-year floodplain (the one-percent-annual-chance floodplain). CTDOH identified and evaluated practicable alternatives to locating the Proposed Action in the floodplain, and analyzed the potential impacts from the Proposed Action, as required by Executive Order 11988 (*Floodplain Management*), in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 55.20 Subpart C, *Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands*.

The Proposed Action consists of three projects: 1) the RBD Pilot Project at the Marina Village public housing site, 2) a Flood Risk Reduction Project on the east side of the South End, and 3) a Resilience Center. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to reduce flood risk in the South End of Bridgeport, CT, thereby protecting critical infrastructure, residences, and businesses from both acute and chronic future flood events.

The Study Area encompasses approximately 380 acres. The majority of the Study Area (265 acres) is mapped within the coastal 'AE' floodplain zone based on the FEMA Flood Insurance Risk Maps. Permanent floodplain impacts of approximately 4.1 acres would occur through the placement of the permanent above-ground structures (i.e., flood barriers) and removal or placement of fill (i.e., stormwater facility, elevation of Seaside Park entrance). The Preferred Alternative would reduce the area at risk of flooding by 64 acres with the construction of the coastal flood defense system.

To identify the alternatives evaluated in the FEIS, each project under the Proposed Action underwent an alternatives evaluation process through which alternatives selection criteria were developed and then used to comparatively screen potential alternatives. This evaluation process eliminated some of the alternatives from further study and refined the alternatives that were analyzed in the DEIS. Based on the results of the alternatives analysis in the DEIS and further consultation with stakeholders, a Preferred Alternative was selected for each project within the Proposed Action. For the Flood Risk Reduction Project, three additional alternatives are evaluated in the FEIS.

The RBD Pilot Project includes construction of an extension of Johnson Street to provide dry egress and a new 2.5-acre stormwater park with a pump and force main connection into Cedar Creek outfall. The western portion of the project is located within the 100-year floodplain. The primary objective of this project is to reduce the risk from chronic storm water flooding in the most vulnerable public housing stock in the city, Marina Village, and the surrounding neighborhood.

The Flood Risk Reduction Project consists of a coastal flood defense system with associated internal drainage management strategies that would lower the risk of acute and chronic flooding in the eastern South End. The Preferred Alternative would elevate University Avenue from Hazel Street across the entrance to Seaside Park.

At 60 Main Street, a flood barrier would be constructed across the site, where it would turn south for a short distance before crossing to the east into PSEG's property and connecting to the elevated podium for PSEG's newly built Harbor Unit 5 (HU5) perimeter sheet pile wall. HU5 would provide the southeast corner of the coastal flood defense system, which would extend north from HU5's access road ramp on the northwest corner of the perimeter wall. The alignment would connect from the ramp over to Bridgeport Energy's eastern border north of Atlantic Street. This arrangement would provide dry egress to HU5 via Atlantic Street. The alignment would continue along the eastern border of Bridgeport Energy's site until it reaches the Pequonnock Substation relocation site, where it would continue north along the eastern property line of the site across Ferry Access Road with a northern tie-in at the elevated CTDOT New Haven Line railroad viaduct. The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1) would provide the greatest geographic extent of coastal flood risk reduction, dry egress to 60 Main Street and HU5, and coastal flood defense to the Bridgeport Energy site and the Pequonnock Substation site. However, CTDOH has elected to evaluate three other alternatives, labeled Alternative 2, Alternative 3, and Alternative 4, as potential alignments of the coastal flood defense system since the Preferred Alternative is dependent on further negotiations with private property owners.

The Flood Risk Reduction Project would also include internal drainage improvements and green infrastructure elements to accommodate stormwater during coastal storm conditions and to reduce flooding from chronic rainfall events. This would include a pump station located on the south side of Henry Street that would collect stormwater runoff and discharge via a proposed overland flow system through Seaside Park to Bridgeport Harbor.

Options for a Resilience Center were considered for educating the public about flood risk and sea level rise. The project would provide funding to The Mary and Eliza Freeman Center to support renovations of a community space within the Freeman Houses complex as well as a pocket park at the entrance of Seaside Park, north of the intersection of University Avenue and Main Street that would include landscape elements for stormwater management, a ramp per Americans with Disabilities Act with integrated platform and stairs.

Due to the nature of the Proposed Action, none of the alternatives are located outside of the 100-year floodplain. Based on the scope of the projects, and the topography of the Study Area, the Proposed Action includes dry egress, stormwater management, and a coastal flood defense system to be constructed within floodplains. While a range of alternatives and options were considered to present varying degrees of flood risk reduction versus resulting environmental impacts, the Preferred Alternative would maximize the area of reduced flood risk, provide dry egress to the most number of facilities and provide the highest benefit to the community.

CTDOH has reevaluated the alternatives to building in the floodplain and has determined that it has no practicable alternative that would avoid impacts to the floodplain, since the projects are meant to provide flood risk reduction to the community within the coastal floodplain. To comply with the National Flood Insurance Act, EO 11988, and all state and regional flood regulations, the Proposed Action has been designed to have a beneficial impact on the floodplain where practicable by minimizing impacts to the greatest extent possible and adequately mitigating unavoidable impacts. Compliance with steps 3 through 6 of the 8-step decision-making process for EO 11988 has been documented in Appendix J of the FEIS, which is available for public inspection and review as described under AVAILABILITY OF THE FEIS above.

The three primary purposes for this notice are: 1) give an opportunity to people who may be affected by activities within the floodplains to express their concerns and provide information about these areas, 2) encourage commenters to offer alternative methods to serve the same project purpose, and methods to minimize and mitigate impacts, which may enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas, 3) inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk that the Federal government will participate in actions taking place in floodplains. Comments on the proposed activity in a 100-year floodplain may be submitted as described under PUBLIC COMMENT above. All comments received during the comment period will be responded to and fully addressed prior to funds being committed to the proposed project, in compliance with Executive Order 11988 or 24 CFR Part 55.