

INSIGHTS & INSPIRATIONS



Sustainability, Resilience conferences bookended Spring Meeting; tours dug into post-Sandy progress

As real estate firms increasingly grapple with the twin challenges of high borrowing costs and sluggish office space demand, investing to curb carbon emissions often falls by the wayside. To shine a light on the imperative – and opportunities – to decarbonize our buildings, and to shore them up to withstand and recover from increasingly destructive storms and floods, **ULI's Lewis Center** sandwiched two relevant events around Spring Meeting week, starting with its Sustainability Forum on Monday April 8 at Pier 57, a renovated pier housing facilities for the James Beard Foundation, Google, and Hudson River Park, among others—and ended with the Resilience Summit on Friday April 12 at NYU's Kimmel Center.

At the Sustainability Forum, the importance of engaging with and lifting up local communities emerged as an important theme for successful neighborhood greening and improvement projects like those of Hudson River Park and Pier 57, an adaptive redevelopment site near the Meatpacking District. “Pier 57 is a love letter to New York City. We wanted to contribute to the larger community and knew that only New York could pull it off,” said **Michael Phillips**, principal, chairman and president of Jamestown, a Pier 57 project partner, referencing a partnership that has resulted in a vibrant marketplace of minority, first-time food vendors; The James Beard Foundation's platform with a show kitchen; the Hudson River Discovery Tank and classrooms; Google client space; and a rooftop space and lounge for the public open from 6am to midnight, with Wi-Fi throughout. “New York City is an incredibly civic place. When we lean into something people show up. For me, the most important thing people see is the harbor and resilience,” he said.

Added **Kris Moon**, president and COO of the James Beard Foundation: “I think of the pier as a Business Improvement District,” noting guidance from the Foundation for aggregate food and supply purchases. “We

invest in [vendors'] staffs, in sustainability. We take a novel approach to problem solve as a group. We test and iterate," he said. "They feel like family. Their success is our success".

Similarly, a prevailing theme at the Resilience Summit was environmental justice, which is rooted in the indigenous idea of reciprocity, of working holistically alongside nature to preserve its abundance, said keynote speaker **Elijah Hutchinson**, executive director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. "We are all here to take action through locally tailored, community-based solutions. We need all hands on deck. This is an existential crisis," he said, noting that the city's climate is now officially humid subtropical. "Our infrastructure was designed for a different climate. Climate change will fundamentally reshape our coasts and communities."

The Office's ambitious agenda includes all new buildings net-zero by 2030, and 100% renewables on the grid by 2040. A recent endeavor includes the creation of 'Climate Strong' communities to address adaptation challenges in an integrated way with community partners; the office is also implementing Climate Resilient Design Guidelines that will take climate considerations into account for new projects. And a number of tours also explored the climate change topic, including an unforgettable one to the Rockaways – with its Arverne East and Beach Green Dunes II projects. Both showed what's possible with forward planning, creative partnerships and a vision, as our knowledge, innovation, risk tolerance for and ability to adapt to climate change grows. [Hurricanes] "Ida and Henri hit New York City with rain events that are more common in Miami," said **Walter Meyer**, founding principal at Local Office Landscape. "These will increasingly be cultural and economic events," he noted, underscoring the importance of involving cross-disciplinary teams in resilience projects. Both projects raised the ground floor level based on new sea level rise projections, put generators on upper floors and harnessed green energy, while tapping the local community for ideas, engagement and excitement.

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