

Chapter 1

Community Engagement Summary Report

Engagement Process & Goals

The community engagement process for *Resilient Rhody 2025* was designed to ensure that local voices and lived experiences meaningfully shaped the plan's direction.

Through a series of community forums, municipal stakeholder meetings, and a dedicated Health Equity Zone session, the project team sought to understand the diverse needs, challenges, and aspirations of residents and partners across the state. These conversations provided critical context and helped ground the project's strategies in the realities of those most affected.

As a culmination of this work, this final engagement summary report presents a record of who participated, what was shared, and which priorities emerged across the various engagement activities. The purpose of this document is to capture the conversations from community members and municipal stakeholder who attended the engagement meetings for *Resilient Rhody 2025*.

Resilient Rhody 2025 Engagement Goals

- 1 **Build** trust and interest.
- 2 **Learn** about community priorities and concerns.
- 3 **Gather** local knowledge and insights.
- 4 **Grow** communities' awareness of the Plan.

Engagement Meetings



Activities Summary

Each forum and meeting incorporated structured engagement activities designed to spark dialogue, surface priorities, and support collaborative planning. Participants engaged in interactive Mentimeter surveys as well as at-table or Miro-based exercises that encouraged them to share perspectives, identify needs, and contribute directly to shaping the developing plan.

Activities included:

- Engagement Stations
- Asset-Hazard Mapping
- Criteria Weighting
- “Build Your Own Project”
- Asset Prioritization

BUILD YOUR OWN → **PROJECT**

Work with your neighbor to explore which actions you think the State should - and shouldn't - fund for Rhode Island's resilience projects.

01 Choose your project. Pick a project card and place it in the Project box below.

02 Choose your solutions. Pick two solutions you'd like the State to fund for this one you wouldn't. Place them in the boxes below and talk with your neighbor about them.

PROJECT

+

Your names: _____
Why did you choose this project? _____

SOLUTION 01

+

This is the solution you think would work best for this project.
Why would this be the best choice?

SOLUTION 02

+

This is another solution that could help or complement your main idea.
How would it strengthen your project?

DON'T USE

+

This is a solution you would not like the State to fund for this project.
Why wouldn't you choose this solution?

PERMEABLE PAVEMENTS

BUILDING/INFRASTRUCTURE RETROFITS

SALT POND RESTORATION

UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS

ZONING + REGULATION

‘Build Your Own Project’ Activity Card

At the HEZ Frontline Community Forum, participants selected one of three hypothetical projects and prioritized solution options.

Community Forum Highlights



05

Community &
HEZ Frontline
Community
Forums

With a total of
158
attendees

Locations:

- Providence Public Library
- Weaver Library, East Providence
- Newport Library
- Rogers Free Library, Bristol
- William D'Abate Elementary School, Olneyville

Dates:

- June 18, 2025
- July 17, 2025
- September 10, 2025
- October 22, 2025
- October 29, 2025

The locations selected for this round of public engagement were chosen to maximize accessibility and participation. Sites with strong public transportation access, opportunities for hybrid (in-person and virtual) participation, and the ability to host large groups were prioritized.

Community Forum invitations were circulated through Department of Environmental Management EC4 mailing lists, DEM social media and climatechange.ri.gov, the Resilience EC4 Subgroup and RI Resilience Partner Group, and the Health Equity Zone Backbone via Department of Health

Community Forum 01

Theme: Gap Analysis + Action Development

Location: Providence Public Library + online

Date: June 18, 2025

Attendees: 20 in person + 22 online

01: What brings you to the forum today?

What brings you to the forum today? We have identified a list of resilience issues. Feel free to select one or more, or write our own.

<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Forests	<input type="text" value="Other (write in)"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater	<input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Wetlands	
<input type="checkbox"/> Stormwater	<input type="checkbox"/> Beaches + Barriers	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dams	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Resources	
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Grid	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Supply	<input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation Shelters + Routes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Health	
<input type="checkbox"/> Roads, Bridges + Culverts	<input type="checkbox"/> Resilience Financing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ports, Seawalls + Tide Gates	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools + Housing	
Name _____ ZIP Code: _____		

'Turn and Talk' Activity Card

The first Community Forum began with a 'Turn and Talk' activity which asked participants to mark the resilience issue that brought them to the forum.

Participants began in small groups, sharing the resilience issues that motivated their attendance. After these conversations, boards displaying gap analysis findings were placed around the room, and participants were invited to add their concerns and priorities. Key topics included community health, stormwater infrastructure, public transportation, and forest resources.

Roads, Bridges + Culverts

Funds are definitely an issue to these projects where there are both resiliency but also environmental concerns. Also need to make sure that evacuation routes are maintained.

Community Health

Need to expand resources for building and supporting resilience hubs.

Drinking Water

There is a lack of planning for water resilience.

Community Perspectives

Participants identified multiple asset types as key areas of concern for climate resilience.

Community Forum 01

Key Findings

- Participants emphasized vulnerabilities across multiple assets types including **stormwater systems, drinking water resilience, and the need to restore wetlands, dunes, and urban forests.**
- There was strong support for **coordinated, statewide resilience strategies** - such as microgrids, resilience hubs, and green infrastructure.
- Community members highlighted the importance of **equity and community preparedness**, including multilingual communication, and support for grassroots organizations.



Participants at Community Forum 1, in Providence, RI © CIVIC

Community Forum 02

Theme: Asset Exposure + Prioritization

Location: Weaver Library, East Providence + online

Date: July 17, 2025

Attendees: 25 in person + 15 online

Community members shared experiences with climate hazards such as flooding, extreme heat, and high winds, as well as community assets where they had experienced these impacts.

Local experiences were then matched with previously drafted asset and hazard typologies, with the goal of identifying any assets or hazards that should be added to the Statewide Vulnerability Assessment. Stormwater and coastal flooding were the most frequently discussed hazards, while housing and schools were the most identified assets.



Community Forum 02

Key Findings

- Participants identified **stormwater** (41 activity matches) and **coastal flooding** (30 activity matches) as the most common and disruptive hazards.
- **Housing, roads, bridges + culverts, stormwater systems, and ports** among the most frequently impacted assets.



A participant at Community Forum 2 in East Providence, RI © CIVIC

Concerned about drinking water facilities located near shorelines – salt intrusion becoming an issue with rising sea levels? (Drinking Water)

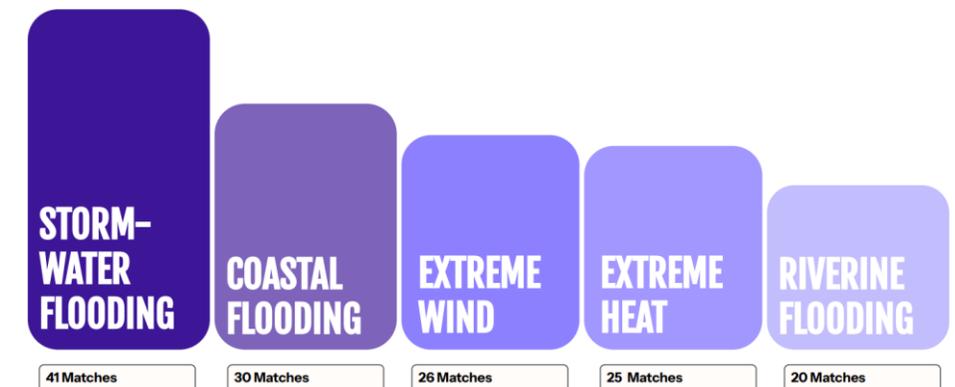
Without HVAC schools close early in June K-12 and university. (Schools)

Community Perspectives

Community members shared specific real-world examples of how climate impacts disrupt local services, infrastructure, and daily life.

Developers still building in coastal wetlands – needs to be concerted push from top down with mandates. (Coastal Wetlands)

Community Identified Hazards



Community Forum 03

Theme: Asset Prioritization

Location: Newport Library + online

Date: September 10, 2025

Attendees: 15 in person + 6 online

Participants scored hypothetical assets against five drafted criteria under consideration for the prioritization approach.

After scoring, they discussed how weighting of criteria could be applied to ensure fair assessment and inclusion of underrepresented project types. The weighting used in this plan was informed by the average weightings developed across groups during this session, as well as averaged weightings developed during parallel Municipal Stakeholder session.

Completed Asset Prioritization Activity Cards

Completed activity cards illustrating each group's scoring approach and prioritization outcomes.

READY, SET, DOT IT!

Activity Goal
Decide how important each of the five criteria is to you when deciding which assets to protect first.
You have to dot/dots to "prioritize" across the five criteria.
Give more dots to the criteria you think are most important.

Instructions
Review the five criteria on the explainer sheet.
Distribute 10 pushpins across the criteria based on what matters most to you.
You must come to consensus with your group and you must use all 10 dots!

Tip
• There are no right or wrong answers.
• We'll revisit this after the group exercise to see if your priorities change.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS (OUT OF 10)
NEED	How urgent is action? Consider the health, safety, and people impacted.	
EQUITY + COMMUNITY SUPPORT	Does it help vulnerable groups and have community backing?	
FEASIBILITY	How practical and complex is it to act?	
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	Does it fit state/local goals and existing plans?	
HOLISTIC RESILIENCE	Does it also benefit nature and sustainability?	

GROUP NAME: _____



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CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	POINTS (OUT OF 10)
NEED	How urgent is action? Consider the health, safety, and people impacted.	4 dots
EQUITY + COMMUNITY SUPPORT	Does it help vulnerable groups and have community backing?	3 dots
FEASIBILITY	How practical and complex is it to act?	2 dots
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	Does it fit state/local goals and existing plans?	1 dot
HOLISTIC RESILIENCE	Does it also benefit nature and sustainability?	0 dots

GROUP NAME: _____

SET THE SCORE!

Activity Goal
Work as a group to score each fictional asset using the five prioritization criteria. Use the information on the asset cards and your group discussion to decide on a score from 1 (low) to 5 (high) for each criterion.

Instructions
• Read each fictional asset card as a group.
• For each asset, discuss how it performs on each criterion.
• Give a score out of 5 for each criterion.
• Add up the total for each asset. Compare totals to see which assets your group would prioritize.

Scoring Guide
1 = Low: Does not perform well on this criterion.
3 = Medium: Moderately performs on this criterion.
5 = High: Strongly performs on this criterion.

	WESTPORT CONNECTOR ROAD	HARBORVIEW FIRE STATION	OAKWOOD STATE FOREST	HARBOR POINT SUBSTATION	RAYVIEW COMMUNITY HOSPITAL	TOTAL
NEED						25
EQUITY + COMMUNITY SUPPORT						25
FEASIBILITY						25
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT						25
HOLISTIC RESILIENCE						25
TOTAL	125					

GROUP NAME: _____



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	WESTPORT CONNECTOR ROAD	HARBORVIEW FIRE STATION	OAKWOOD STATE FOREST	HARBOR POINT SUBSTATION	RAYVIEW COMMUNITY HOSPITAL	TOTAL
NEED	5/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	20
EQUITY + COMMUNITY SUPPORT	4/5	3/5	2/5	3/5	5/5	19
FEASIBILITY	4/5	4/5	5/5	3/5	3/5	19
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	1/5	2/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	16
HOLISTIC RESILIENCE	1/5	2/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	17
TOTAL	15	17	17	23	27	

GROUP NAME: _____



Community Forum 03

Key Findings

- Participants prioritized **Need, Equity & Community Support**, and **Holistic Resilience** as the most important criteria for asset prioritization.
- Through scoring hypothetical assets, attendees highlighted **hospitals, substations, emergency services, and major roads** as high-need assets.
- After testing the criteria, participants shifted toward **greater emphasis on Strategic Alignment criterion and less on Feasibility criterion.**

NEED

"I'm most concerned about urgency, like a hospital serving many people. Something that urgent is tied to community support."

EQUITY / COMMUNITY

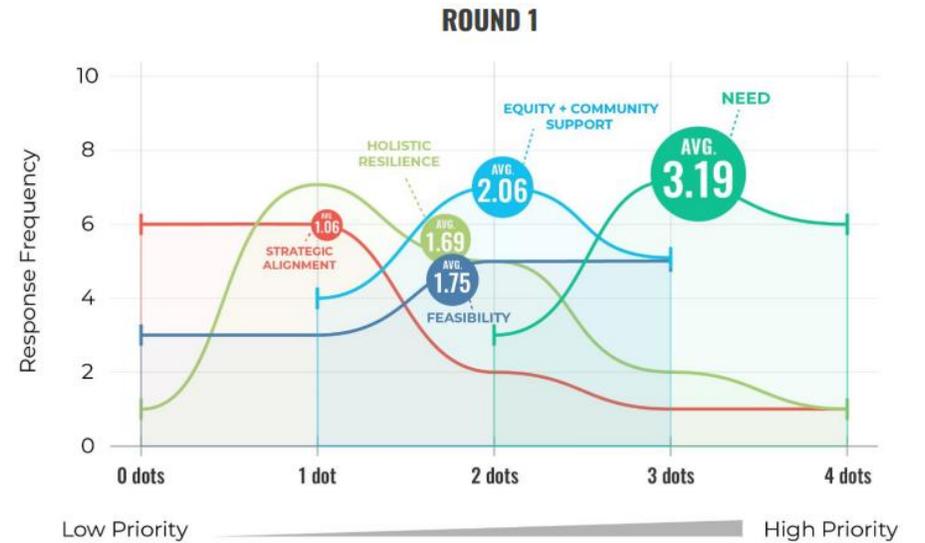
"Hospital, emergency services, and substation help the most households."

HOLISTIC RESILIENCE

"Not prioritizing holistic resilience now makes our future challenges more difficult."

Community Perspectives

Community-expressed perspectives illustrating the values behind prioritization choices.



Criteria Prioritization Results

Participants ranked criteria across two scoring rounds.

Community Forum 04

Theme: Priority Assets + Solution Development

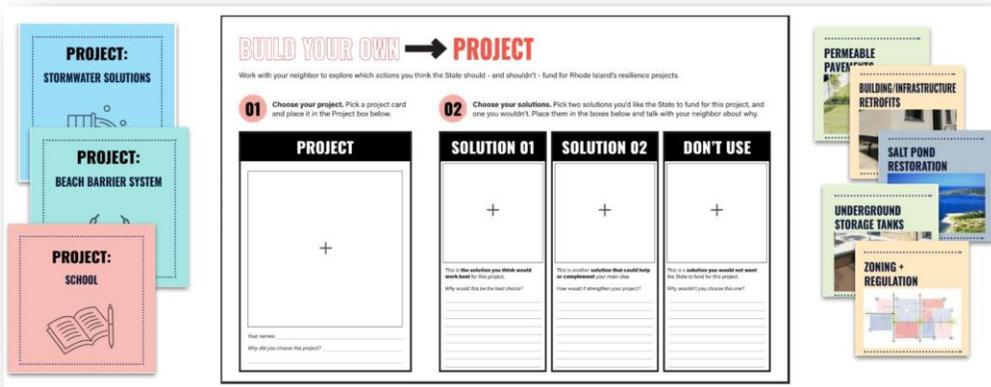
Location: Rogers Free Library, Bristol + online

Date: October 22, 2025

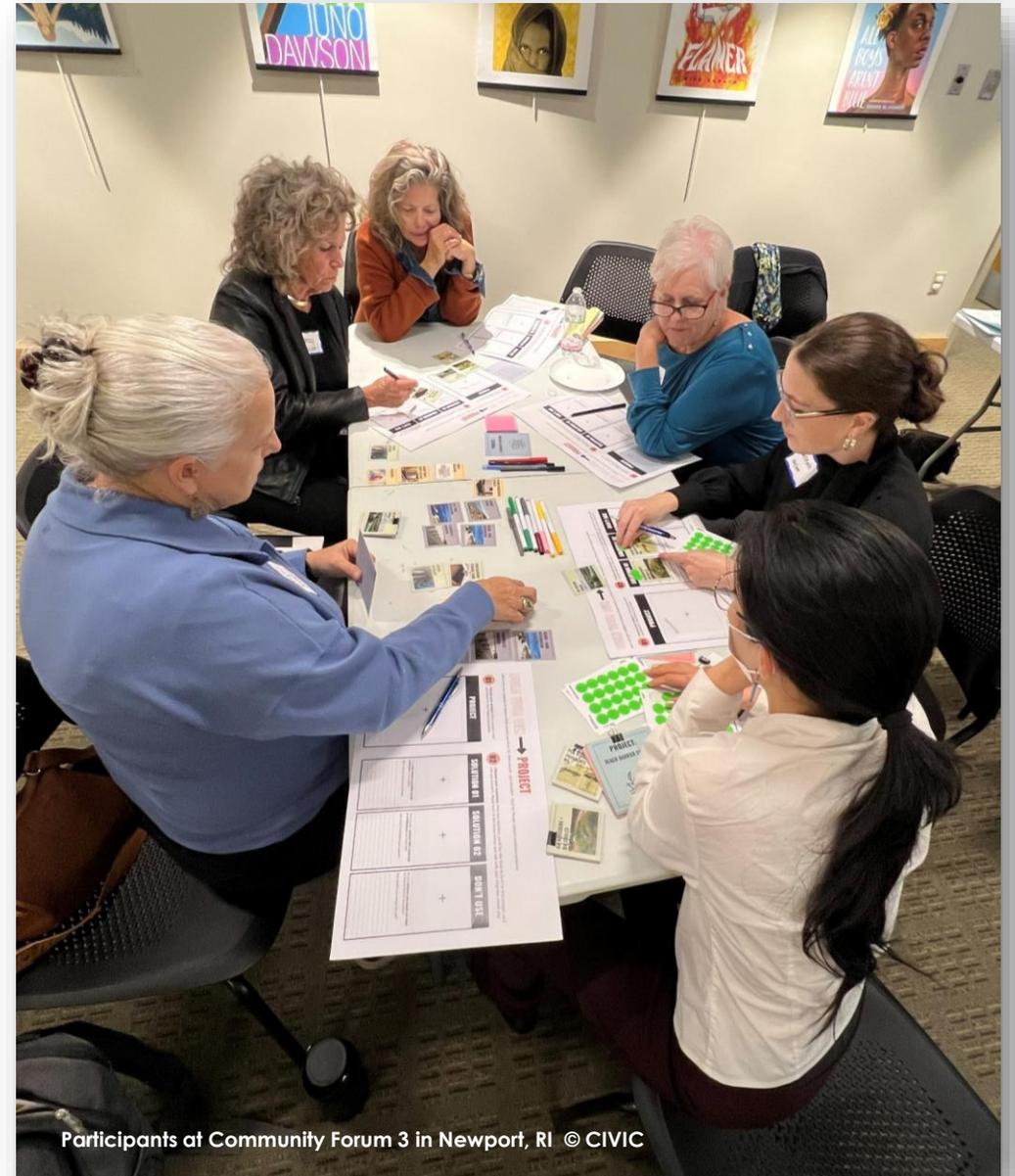
Attendees: 7 in person + 6 online

A shortlist of identified priority assets and projects was shared with participants, followed by an anonymous survey to collect feedback. Participants then completed the "Build Your Own Project" activity, selecting hypothetical assets and choosing from a range of solution options for each asset.

Popular strategies included rain gardens and bioswales, relocation, permeable pavements, and zoning regulation. Feedback from this session played a critical role in shaping the Climate Resilience and Adaptation Solutions.



Build Your Own Project Activity Cards



Participants at Community Forum 3 in Newport, RI © CIVIC

Community Forum 04

Key Findings

- Participants emphasized that the State should prioritize **nature-based solutions** and low impact stormwater strategies, consistently selecting rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavements, and dune and beach restoration.
- Attendees chose **relocation/retreat** and **building retrofits** as viable resilience strategies, particularly when protecting assets like schools or areas facing repeated flooding.
- Participants expressed **strong support for policy and planning interventions** such as updated zoning, regulation, and system upgrades.



Solution 01 (the best solution):

**Rain Gardens
+ Bioswales (3)**

Solution 02:

**Permeable
Pavements (3)**



Solution 01 (the best solution):

**Beach + Dune Restoration (2)
Cobble Berms (2)**

Solution 02:

Zoning + Regulation (4)



Solution 01 (the best solution):

**Rain Gardens + Bioswales
(4)**

Solution 02:

Relocation (4)

HEZ Frontline Community Forum

Theme: Priority Assets + Solution Development

Location: William D'Abate Elementary School + online

Date: October 29, 2025

Attendees: 42

This session focused on Rhode Island's Health Equity Zones (HEZs) and frontline community organizations. In an open discussion, participants identified housing, communication infrastructure, emergency response infrastructure, and local education on emergency preparedness as priority areas. They also completed the "Build Your Own Project" activity to explore potential solutions.



Participants at HEZ Frontline Community Forum in Olneyville, Providence, RI © CIVIC

HEZ Frontline Community Forum

Key Findings

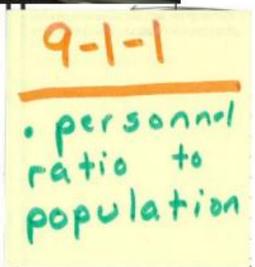
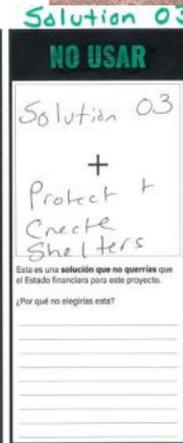
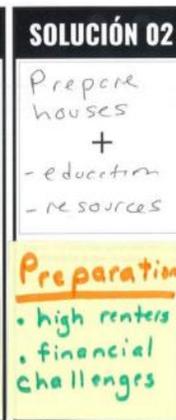
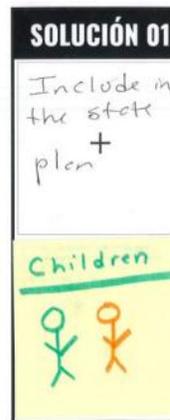
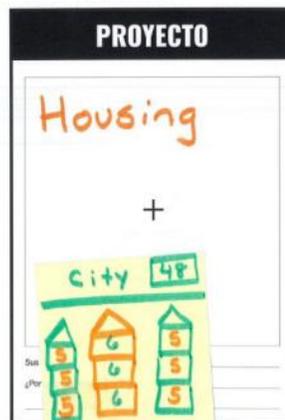
- Participants emphasized that **housing, communications infrastructure, and emergency response** capacity must be core priorities, alongside better local education and **multilingual communication on preparedness** and alerts.
- Participants favored **system upgrades, permeable pavements, rain gardens/bioswales, and zoning/regulatory tools**.
- Community members highlighted the need for **proactive maintenance** and stronger protections for riverbanks and **natural buffers**, stressing that regulations should safeguard these areas as shared natural assets rather than negotiable private property.



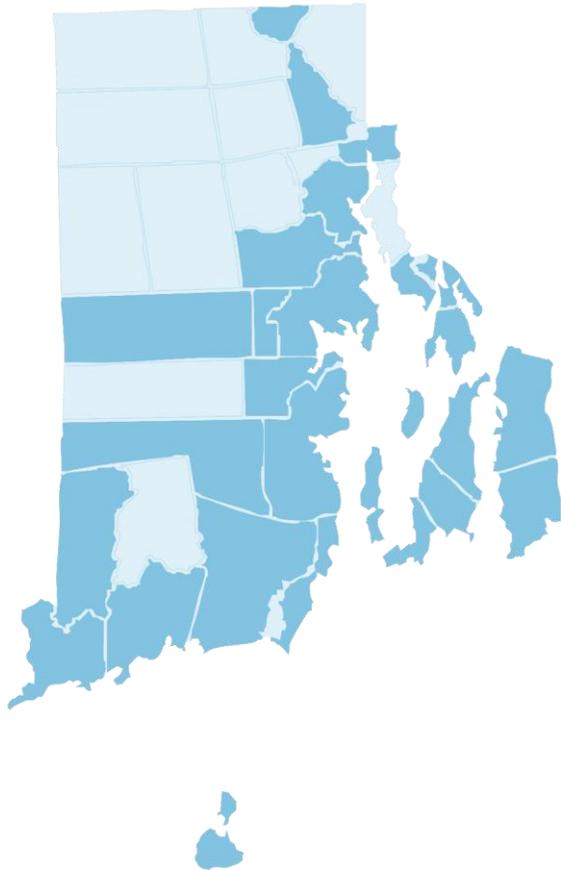
Participants at HEZ Frontline Community Forum in Olneyville, Providence, RI © CIVIC

RAIN GARDENS + BIOSWALES

"This could be used as a learning tool for the students, opportunity for the students to learn to plant basics." (x3)



Municipal Stakeholder Working Sessions Highlights



06

Municipal Stakeholder Working Sessions

With a total of
130
attendees

Dates:

- June 20, 2025
- July 18, 2025
- August 29, 2025
- September 12, 2025
- October 3, 2025
- October 24, 2025

Location:

All meetings were held virtually

Municipal Stakeholder Forum invitations were circulated to all municipal planning staff via Division of Statewide Planning, as well as to all local Municipal Resilience Program (MRP) Core Team members via Department of Environmental Management.

Municipal Resilience Program (MRP) Core Teams consist of municipal staff and leadership that collaboratively conduct their city or town's local resilience planning and project efforts through the MRP, often consisting of planning, DPW, engineering, fire & police, and related staff; planning and environmental commission members; town council members; town administrators; and/or mayors.

Municipal Stakeholder Working Session 01

Theme: Gap Analysis + Action Development

Date: June 20, 2025

Attendees: 30

Activity:

Stakeholders completed a survey on which resilience issues brought them to the working session.

After the survey, virtual whiteboards were presented with asset types and stakeholders were requested to identify asset-specific resilience challenges.

Key Findings:

Stakeholders called for stronger stewardship and coordinated action, including **improved emergency communication protocols**, expanded heat response, and **integrating resilience into schools' curricula**.

Community Health

I think the basics like how sustainability, resilience, and adaptation should be taught with hands-on exercises to K-12! They like cascading consequences!

Stormwater

Want to see state resiliency officers spearhead PL-566 for Moshassuck River for Pawt, PVD, Lincoln, CF. great funding support for this - but need someone to help be through-line for all communities. This is like a 10-yr process.

Participants highlighted major capacity and **funding gaps**, noting delays in resilience projects, **limited staffing**, over-reliance on federal funding, and the **need for State-led coordination, regional grants (multiple municipal applicants), and long-term investment in resilient infrastructure**.

Stakeholders emphasized **critical infrastructure vulnerabilities**, including aging stormwater and sewer systems; aquifer risks, inadequate public awareness of runoff, the **need for clearer policies on development in flood-prone areas**.

Beaches + Barriers

Private residential development on barriers is largely not something that can be protected. We need tools to disincentive investment and incentivize relocation.

Municipal Stakeholder Working Session 04

Theme: Asset Prioritization
Date: September 12, 2025
Attendees: 20

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	POINTS
Need	How urgent is action? Health, safety, and justice impacted?	#1 Strategic alignment Feasibility	3
Equity & Community Support	Does it help vulnerable groups and have community backing?	Community support Equity & justice Feasibility	2
Feasibility	How practical and complex is it to act?	#2 Strategic alignment Need Equity & justice	2
Strategic Alignment	Does it fit statewide goals and existing plans?	#5 Strategic alignment Need Equity & justice Feasibility	1
Holistic Resilience	Does it also benefit nature and sustainability?	#2 Service criticality Guided by the State	2

Asset Prioritization Activity

Stakeholders used a point system to weight asset prioritization criteria by level of importance.

Activity:

Stakeholders ranked the importance of various criteria that were to be used for prioritizing assets, with Need and Feasibility emerging as the top priorities.

Stakeholders then prioritized hypothetical assets against these criteria. Hospitals, substations, and major roads ranked highest.

The weighting applied in this plan was based on the average values developed across groups during this session, as well as those derived from parallel Community Forum session.

Key Takeaways:

- Municipal stakeholders emphasized **Need and Feasibility** as the top criteria for prioritizing assets, with strategic alignment and holistic resilience considered secondary.
- Participants noted that **infrastructure assets remain the highest priority**, while natural systems are consistently under-prioritized despite their protective value.
- In scoring exercises, assets like **hospitals, substations, and major roads** ranked highest on need and service criticality, confirming strong alignment across municipalities on what should be addressed first.

Municipal Stakeholder Working Session 05

Theme: Priority Assets

Date: October 3, 2025

Attendees: 10

ASSET TYPE	ASSET	MUNICIPALITY	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	
Bridges <small>There is possibility for redundancy</small>	Newport Bridge (Pell Bridge)	Newport-Jamestown	●	●		
	Mount Hope Bridge	Bristol		●	●	
Roads* (all listed are evacuation routes)	RI-114 Corridor	East Providence-Bristol				
	I-95 in Cranston	Cranston	●	●		
	RI-1A in Westerly	Westerly		●	●	
Public Transportation	Aquidneck Avenue in Middletown	Middletown				
	Providence Station	Providence		●		
Port Infrastructure	Block Island - Port of Galilee Ferry Connectivity	New Shoreham				
	East Providence Port Infrastructure	East Providence			●	
Energy	Providence Port Infrastructure	Providence			●	
	Block Island Energy Resilience (Transmission Lines & BIPC)	New Shoreham				
	Manchester Street Power Plant	Providence				
	Washington County Transmission Lines	N/A	●	●		
	Green Providence Wind Turbines	Providence			●	
Dams <small>Easton Pond Dam is a priority</small>	Rhode Island State Energy Center Power Plant	Johnston				
	Easton Pond Reservoir & Dam	Newport-Middletown	●	●		
Stormwater Infrastructure <small>Stormwater infrastructure as overall second priority</small>	Waterman Lake Dam	Glocester, Smithfield				
	Pawtucket Combined Sewer & Stormwater Infrastructure	Pawtucket		●	●	
	Westerly Stormwater Infrastructure	Westerly		●	●	
	Providence Sewer Overflows Mitigation	Providence		●	●	
	Newport Sewered Area	Newport, Portsmouth, Middletown	●	●		
	South Kingstown Sewered Areas	South Kingstown		●	●	
	West Warwick Sewered Area	West Warwick		●	●	
East Providence Sewered Area	East Providence		●	●		
Wastewater	Bucklin Point WWTP & Bucklin Point Sewered Areas	East Providence	●	●		
	Cranston WWTP	Cranston	●	●		
Drinking Water Infrastructure <small>These reservoirs are considered for each other, if one of them has a problem, you have the other</small>	Gardiner Pond Reservoir	Middletown				
	Nelson Pond Reservoir	Newport		●		
	Green End Pond Reservoir	Newport				

Activity:

A draft shortlist of identified priority asserts were shared with Municipal stakeholders, who provided feedback on the selections. Stakeholders then discussed the priority assets in small groups.

These priority assets informed the Climate Adaptation & Resilience Solutions developed in this plan.

Key Takeaways:

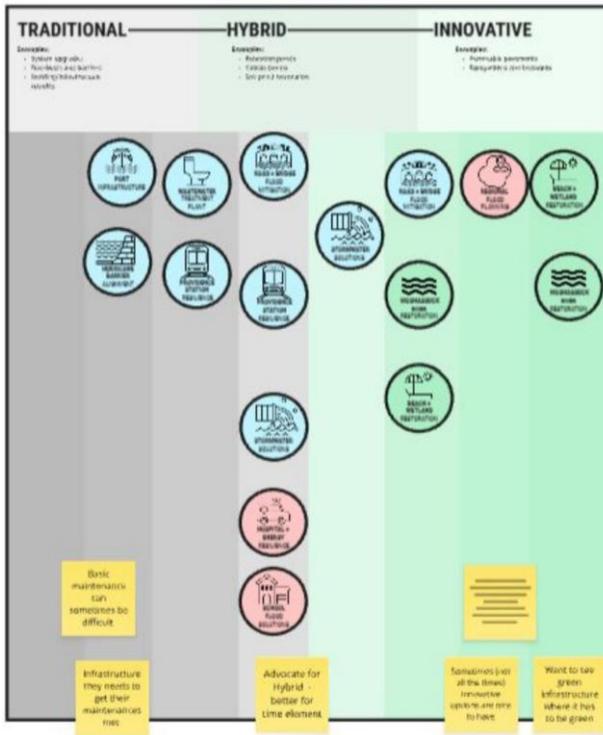
- Stakeholders prioritized critical infrastructure including **wastewater systems, major evacuation roads, hospitals, and energy transmission lines**, reflecting the importance of assets that serve large populations and are essential for emergency response and continuity of services.
- Participants emphasized that **wastewater, stormwater, and sewered areas require urgent investment**, noting widespread aging infrastructure, increased stress from extreme rainfall, and the need for coordinated upgrades across multiple municipalities.
- In both individual and group prioritization rounds, stakeholders **emphasized Providence Port, coastal wetlands, and key bridges**, the importance of economic resilience, **natural system protection**, and maintaining **regional mobility**.

Municipal Stakeholder Working Session 06

Theme: Solution Development

Date: October 24, 2025

Attendees: 15



Activity:

An updated draft of the asset shortlist and Climate Resilience Solutions were shared with municipal stakeholders.

Stakeholders were then asked to review the proposed solutions and respond to questions about the level of innovation, the role of the State can take in implementation, and potential funding approaches.

This session informed the strategies developed for Chapter 5: Climate Adaptation & Resilience Solutions.

Are there resilience strategies that you've seen or heard of in other states you'd like to see adopted in Rhode Island?

- Floating wetlands
- Living shoreline techniques
- State funding of green infrastructure maintenance (MA)
- Making sure that road development includes hybrid/green infra enhancements for drainage and aquifer recharge

Key Takeaways:

- Stakeholders emphasized that **the State must play a major role in funding and technical assistance**, particularly for projects requiring **regional coordination, nature-based solutions, and long-term climate adaptation**—issues that small towns lack capacity to manage.
- Participants prioritized resilience investments that deliver flood-risk reduction, equitable outcomes, and economic stability, while **cautioning against continued investment in shoreline hardening or projects that incentivize development in vulnerable areas**.
- Stakeholders expressed strong support for **hybrid and innovative solutions** while recognizing that limited local capacity often forces communities to rely on more traditional, “fix-it-fast” approaches.

Conclusion

Engagement played a central role in shaping *Resilient Rhody 2025*, informing key decision-making processes throughout the Plan.

This input influenced the development of resilience actions, the asset-hazard pairings used in the vulnerability assessment, the identification and weighting of prioritization criteria, and the selection of the solutions and investment strategies advanced in the Plan.

Examples of how engagement shaped the Plan include:

- Each Action includes indicators noting when it is driven by community input.
- The weighting used in the prioritization framework was derived from the average of scores between community members and municipal stakeholders.
- The Solutions and Actions presented in this Plan directly reflect priorities raised across engagement forums, meetings, and workshops.
- Every Solution features a story, example, or key takeaway rooted in the engagement process, demonstrating how local knowledge and lived experience informed recommended interventions.

Looking Ahead

To maximize accessibility and participation, engagement sessions were held in locations with strong public transportation access, options for hybrid (in-person and virtual) attendance, and the capacity to accommodate large groups.

Looking ahead, use of engagement best practices—such as meeting people where they are, diversifying outreach methods, and incorporating feedback loops—will help ensure that local knowledge and community voices remain central to ongoing plan updates.

Future outreach efforts will also place additional emphasis on communities that were less represented in this engagement cycle, including inland municipalities and communities in the southwestern region of the state, reinforcing a commitment to equitable and inclusive engagement across Rhode Island.