



SEASIDE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 29, 2013

architecture for humanity





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ARCHITECTURE FOR HUMANITY

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[Above: Image of Jetstar roller coaster sitting amongst the waves after Sandy.]

HURRICANE SANDY RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Since 1999, Architecture for Humanity has responded to fifteen major disasters throughout the world and spearheaded reconstruction programs to support affected communities. Every disaster zone delivers a unique set of challenges, and Architecture for Humanity believes that communication, coordination and access to professional design and construction resources and knowledge are the most critical components for successful long-term reconstruction. After the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy on the East Coast, Architecture for Humanity established the Hurricane Sandy Reconstruction Program in response to the needs of homeowners, small business owners and community groups to rebuild in a resilient and sustainable manner. The Program is run by NY-based full-time professional staff with the support of our international headquarter office in San Francisco, California.

The mission of the Hurricane Sandy Reconstruction Program is to provide under served communities hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy the tools and resources to recover and rebuild their built environment, leading to the enhancement of the community's social infrastructure, and improvement of livelihoods that are stronger and more resilient than ever before.

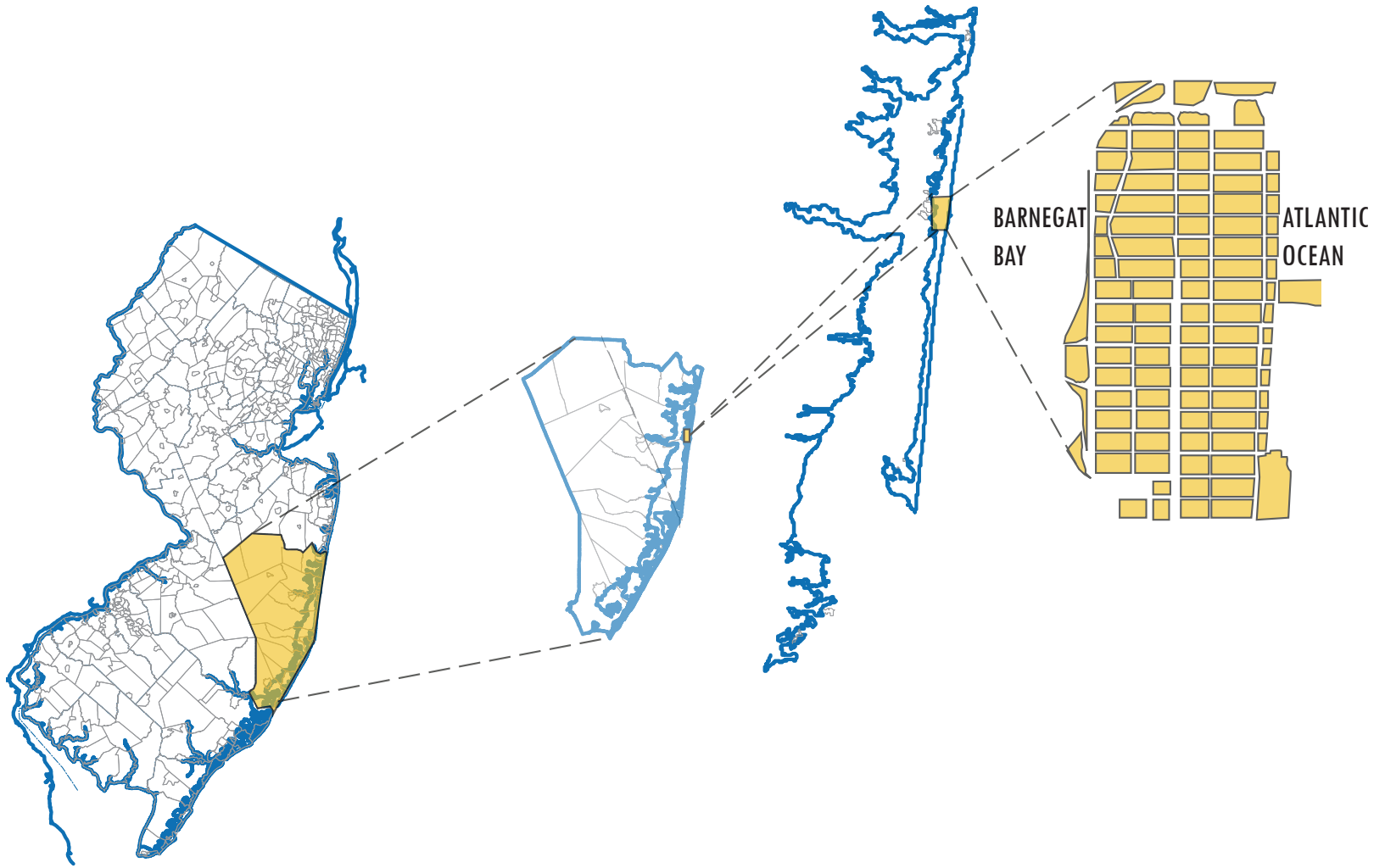
The Hurricane Sandy Reconstruction Program will identify programs and projects that address the unmet reconstruction needs in communities by implementing resilient strategies to build back better. The Program will focus on the physical rebuilding of structures via services provided on a pro bono or reduced-fee basis and follow our community engagement methodology. The community workshops are critical in building excitement for the project within the community and building a shared vision for the way residents see their neighborhoods transforming for a brighter future.

RESTORE THE SHORE

The Restore the Shore program is focused on the Borough of Seaside Heights, the home of many fond Jersey Shore family memories. Leading up to this past summer season, the Borough completed the reconstruction of the boardwalk. As part of the next phase of reconstruction and in alignment with their community vision, Architecture for Humanity will lead the design and construction of a new event center and boardwalk beautification projects. These additions will enrich the beach front as a destination for visitors, families and residents of all ages.

The vision for this undertaking is to create a destination for community gatherings and regional arts which could include performances, ceremonies, outdoor movies, cultural events and recreational activities. The event center replaces some of the attractions and amusements lost to the storm and will serve as an anchor among the many remaining boardwalk attractions. The events center will be an outdoor facility to serve the destination's busiest seasons of May – October. Additionally, boardwalk improvements will provide sun shading and weather protection with opportunities for a respite for boardwalkers.

ABSTRACT



NEW JERSEY

The United States Census Bureau estimates that the population of New Jersey is 8,864,590 people.

OCEAN COUNTY

The county has a total area of 915.40 square miles.

SEASIDE HEIGHTS

During the summer months, the town attracts as many as 65,000 visitors.

COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

After much anticipation and discussion, the Restore the Shore project kicked off the programming and design process for its new events center with a community design workshop. Community workshops are an excellent way to engage the community in the project, get to know the people the project will serve and to have fun. Moreover, community members represent the best authorities on their needs. Every successful design begins with their input.

Held on the anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, the participatory design and construction process integrated over sixty residents, business owners and community members in a lively conversation. The evening began with introductions by the Borough Administrator and many of the different organizations who graciously attended to provide guidance and help the project become an enduring reality. In attendance with Architecture for Humanity were representatives from the architecture firm Gensler, ARUP Engineering, New Jersey Institute of Technology's Center for Resilient Design, the New Jersey Planning Association and numerous design students from institutions along the eastern seaboard who had childhood memories of the coastal town.

Over the course of the evening, the workshop focused on two distinct scales of the community. The first addressed master planning concerns across the barrier island where participants articulated the community's unique identity. Through a mapping activity, participants told their personal stories of how the identity of Seaside Heights has changed over the past several decades. People wrote their stories on colored paper cut to resemble the planks of the newly constructed boardwalk, and as they taped their planks to the wall, collectively the stories grew to present a boardwalk collage of experience and engagement.

As the workshop progressed, the scale of the activities narrowed and focused upon the proposed events center. The participants paired up with architects, engineers and planners to form conceptual design teams. Each team then tackled the fundamental concepts for the design process and sketched ideas concerning site location, programming, form, circulation and views. The project team shared images of similar events centers and the participants had the opportunity to vote on those they felt best represented Seaside Heights.

At the conclusion of the evening, the workshop brought the community together in a unified voice on how the Restore the Shore project can help Seaside Heights achieve its vision for resilient growth. With generations serving as the anchor of what once was, many stepped up to craft the vision for the future generations to come - a historic coastal community where families can be nurtured and residents may take pride in living in harmony with the natural environment.

IDENTITY:

What makes Seaside Heights unique?

IN GROUPS, THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS RECOLLECT THEIR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES AND SHARE THEIR OBSERVATIONS AND HOPES FOR SEASIDE HEIGHTS' FUTURE

COMMUNITY VISION DIAGRAM

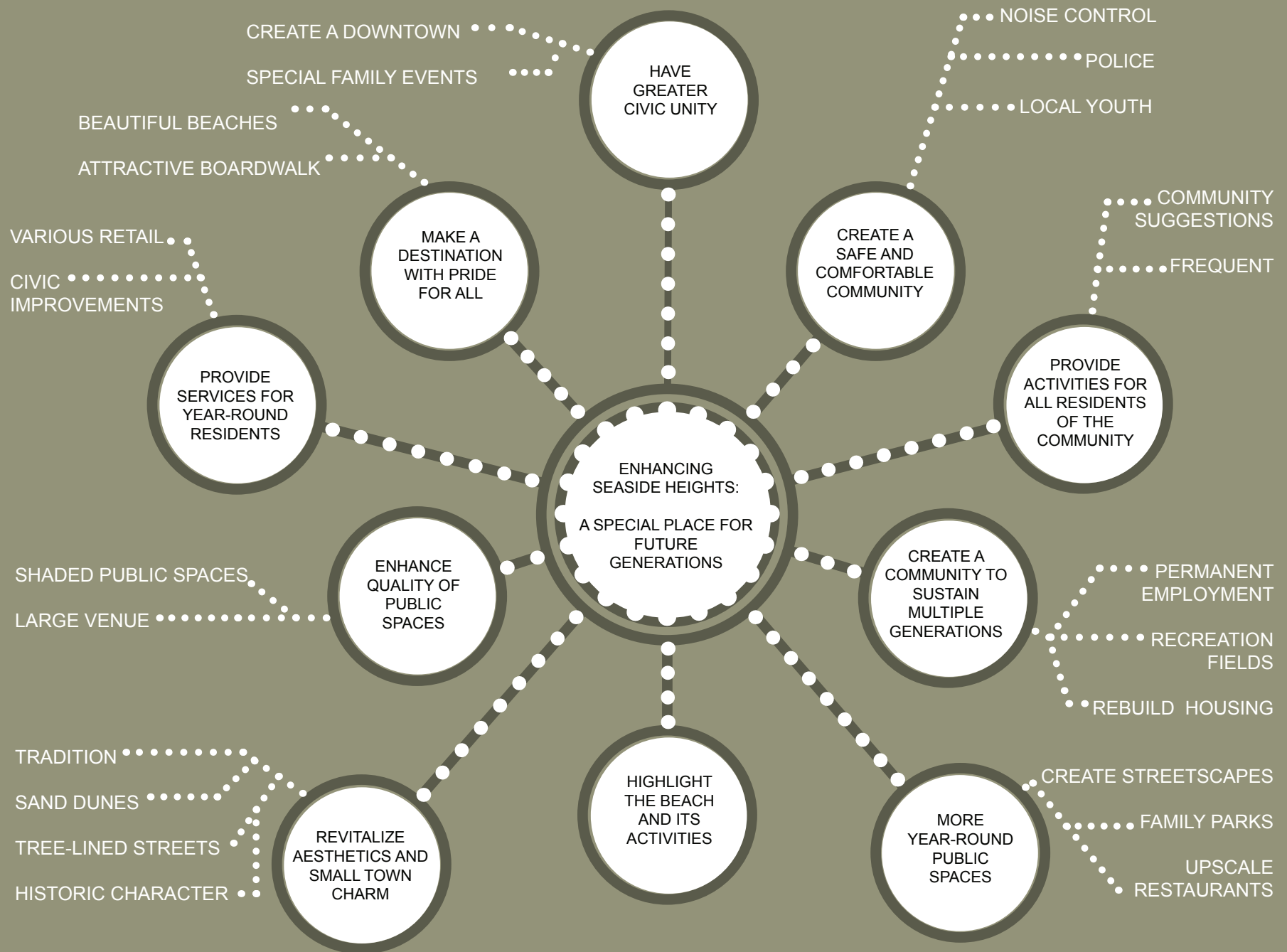
The common hopes and desires expressed by the participants have been collected into the diagram on the following page. Each desire is accompanied with suggestions which aim to enhance the current community.



[Above: Residents participate in the activity.]



[Above: The boardwalk at Blaine Avenue with its new lighting installed.]



PLANNING:

What are some broader community aspects for Seaside Heights?

PERMANENT RESIDENTS HAD TO SAY....

"Increased tourist income = lower property owner taxes."

"Need help to remain year-round residents."

"Event center should be family-oriented: weddings, graduations, retirement parties, Disney shows, comedy nights, craft shows... all 365 days a year."

"Big parking area bay-side with jitney buses to bring visitors around town."

"Spruce up the town."

"Better designs for new housing."

"Overcome some negative persona of community; Rebuild Main Street/ Downtown; Clean up the community."

"Re-brand the town with a new identity."

"Create an oceanfront day spa, cafes and high-end stores."

"Improve ambience of town to reflect best wholesome entertainment and bring families back."

"Family style entertainment and better variety of restaurants on the boardwalk."

"Colorful/fun events throughout whole community; upscale shopping and cafes."

"More history."

"Need new lifeguard headquarters and housing to attract families."

"Appeal to young families; Seaside 2.0."

"Promote family tourism and events."

"Some bistros and classy town stores."

"Create a public fund through a town authority to float loans for derelict properties."

"Reposition the town as a family-oriented destination."

"Create family entertainment."

"Create a positive town image."

"Create a safe community and beach resort destination."

"A town theme that encompasses businesses and homes; color scheme, mardigras, carnivals and festivals."

"Help residents more than tourists and make the town more family oriented."

"Premiere resort community."

"Revitalize the natural landscape the community has to offer."

BUSINESS OWNERS HAD TO SAY....

“Concert series.”

“Need help getting rentals running.”

“Signage that is inviting; A make-over of the aesthetics of the businesses so they visually tie together; Retail mall shower; Redesign the entrance of the town.”

“Create quality entertainment.”

“Create an educational center that will attract students year round; a small scenic center and aquarium that celebrates the community’s marine life.”

“Utilize the boardwalk to add assets and attract more tourism.”

“Bring in more family friendly events to increase tourism”

“A stronger business community creates a stronger residential community.”

“Increase family-oriented tourism and provide more activities to make the community an overall destination.”

OTHERS HAD TO SAY...

“Help the American Legion.” (Commander of the American Legion)

“More conducive to seasonal property owners.” (seasonal property owner)

“Add more modern homes, stores and hotels.” (new renter)



[Above: Image of Planning Plank exercise]



[Above: Image of mapping exercise]

PROJECT PRECEDENTS: Preferences

THE COMMUNITY WAS ASKED TO INDIVIDUALLY SELECT PRECEDENTS THEY FEEL WOULD BEST MATCH THE IDENTITY OF SEASIDE HEIGHTS. PRECEDENTS INCLUDED GLOBAL EXAMPLES OF EVENTS CENTERS, OUTDOOR SPACES, SEATING AND LIGHTING.



(Above: Images of precedent exercise)





COMMUNITY PREFERENCES: PRECEDENT DIAGRAM

After each participant had a chance to vote, the results were supportive of an events center design harkening back to the historic past of the small coastal community. As seen in this diagram, Sea Isle City was chosen as the preferred precedent. The Palmer events center and the Highgate Pavilion were selected as the second and third preferences among the participants.

PROJECT

LOCATION: Site Options

IN GROUPS, THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO CONSIDER THE SITING OF THE EVENTS CENTER AT ONE OF TWO LOCATIONS ALONG THE BOARDWALK.

The teams of participants were discussing the advantages each site has to offer and how the addition of the events center could enhance their overall experience. One site - Option A - is at the end of Grant Avenue, adjacent to the pier. The second site - Option B - is near the end of Blaine Avenue and has increased pedestrian traffic. The Participants voted as follows:

Site Option "A" - (54 participants preferred this site)



Site Option "B" - (8 participants preferred this site)



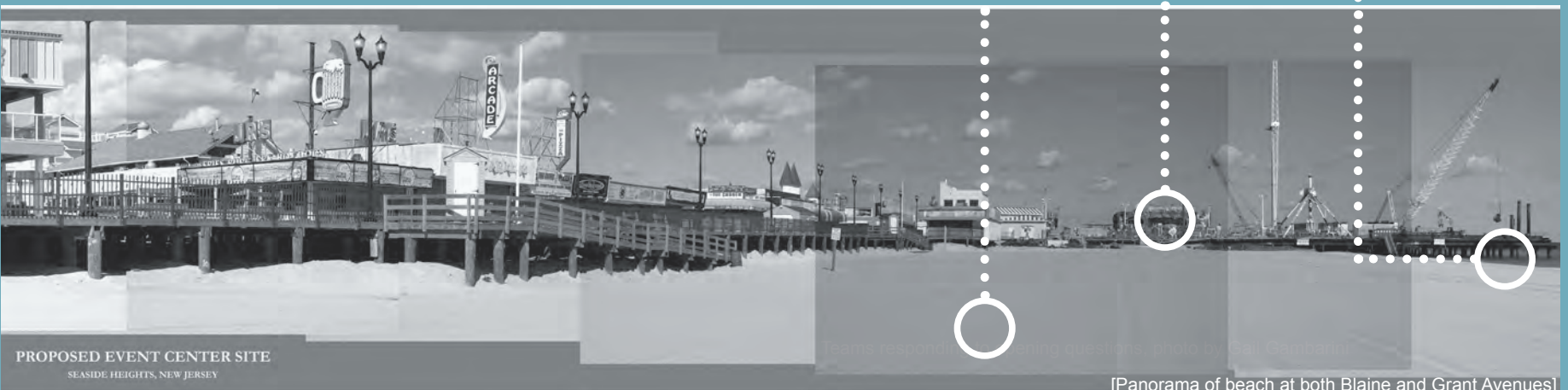
[Above: Site Plan]

SURROUNDING VIEWS

Following their site options exercise, the participants were asked which views along the boardwalk they felt were important to capture. The community strongly acknowledged how extraordinary the ocean views are from Blaine Avenue and appreciate the numerous shore front activities that occur along the beach. Additionally, the participants discussed a new opportunity for views at Grant Avenue if the existing vacant structure at the site were to be removed. Through careful design and placement, Grant Avenue could offer various beach front views, as well as glimpses of the neighboring Casino Pier amusements.

Most commonly highlighted views:

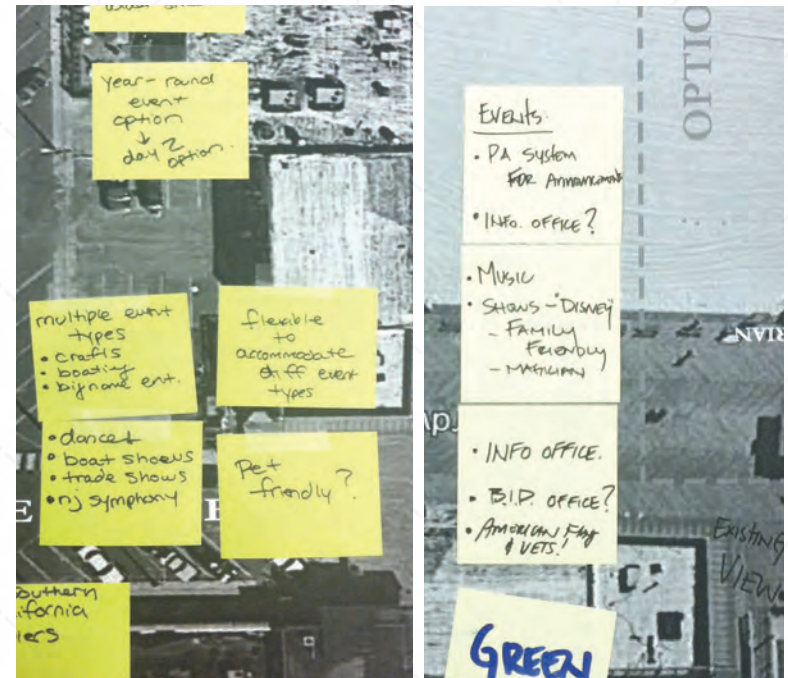
- The Beach
- The Ocean
- The Amusements



[Panorama of beach at both Blaine and Grant Avenues]

PROGRAM

WHEN ASKED TO CONTEMPLATE PROGRAMMING FOR THE EVENT CENTER, SEASIDE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY MEMBERS GENERATED NUMEROUS IDEAS SPANNING ALL SEASONS OF THE YEAR, EMPHASIZING THE DESIRE FOR FAMILY ACTIVITIES.



[Above: Program Diagram]

DESIGN

AS THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP NARROWED ITS FOCUS ON THE DESIGN OF THE NEW EVENTS CENTER, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS AND PLANNERS JOINED THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS TO FORM DESIGN TEAMS. EACH TEAM TACKLED COMMON CONCEPTS THAT IMPACT THE INITIAL DESIGN, SUCH AS CIRCULATION, FORM, ACCESS AND ADAPTABILITY OF THE SITE TO HOST A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY-ORIENTED EVENTS.



[This Page: Participants sketching in design teams]

CHARRETTE SUMMARY

THROUGH THE COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP, THE PARTICIPANTS WERE ABLE TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS ON A RENEWED VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY OF SEASIDE HEIGHTS. THIS VISION EXTENDS BEYOND AN EVENT CENTER AND BEGINS TO VISUALIZE A PATH FORWARD FOR SEASIDE HEIGHTS AS THEY CONTINUE TO RECOVER FROM HURRICANE SANDY.



Over the course of the evening, multiple participants expressed the need to sustain a thriving year-round community. Increasing streetscaping, providing a large recreational park and revitalizing the downtown with a variety of retail and locally available services were all mentioned as opportunities. Many residents and business owners collectively called for the vision to support a family-oriented environment that can support people from differing generations.

When we prepare for the design process for the new events center, we will consider several of these key themes as Schematic Design points. Building on lessons learned from the community design workshop, we will focus the design process on creating a conceptual design that considers an adaptable or convertible space along the shore front. With keeping a permanent, year-round community in mind, the events center will aim to be able to accommodate various events of all types and to have the site function as a public space even when the center is not in operation. Other design points will be to focus on sound containment, celebrate the surrounding ocean views and address signage and advertisement along the boardwalk. Additionally, the center will strive to include the integration of sunshading devices located throughout the boardwalk vicinity and incorporate resilient coastal construction measures to ensure longevity of the area for generations to come.

The thoughts expressed at the Community Workshop form the design principles that will guide a cohesive design that serves the community. With the completion of the workshop, the design team will commence the design and development of the events center and boardwalk improvements, to be constructed summer of 2014.



[Seaside Heights Community Design Workshop]

APPENDIX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ARCHITECTURE FOR HUMANITY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND PEOPLE WHO, WITHOUT THEIR ASSISTANCE AND GENEROUS PARTICIPATION, THIS EVENT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL.

PARTNERS

MTV:

MTV, through its relationship with Viacom, a world leader in both entertainment and philanthropy, partnered with Architecture for Humanity to provide much needed assistance immediately following the storm and to prepare for the reconstruction of the coastal community.

The Borough of Seaside Heights:

John Camera and Michael Loundy

Gensler, Architect of Record:

Matthew Wolfe

ARUP Engineering, Engineer of Record:

Seth Wolfe

American Planning Association of New Jersey:

Thomas Schulze, Sheena Collum and Charles Slatini

The Center for Resilient Design,

The New Jersey Institute of Technology:

Thomas Dallessio

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy,

Rutgers University:

Kelly Bickers

And an extended thank you to Elyse Agnello, Charles Mason and Lizette Chaparro for their assistance and support throughout the event.

