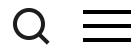




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Corey Chao Looks at Sea Level Rise Through Media and Planning

Future Stories

By Corey Chao

Welcome to Sea Bright, NJ—one of hundreds of coastal towns in the region on the front lines of sea-level rise. Still recovering from Superstorm Sandy, Sea Bright residents are debating stark questions about the town's long-term future—including

the existential possibility that it may eventually be uninhabitable. [Six feet of sea-level rise](#) are possible as early as 2080 (perhaps earlier given the climate-change-denying [oil and gas executives](#) lining up for high-level government posts), but its impact will shake the region long before that: “one foot of sea level rise will inundate nearly 60 square miles [in the NYC metro area], where more than 19,000 residents in 10,000 homes live today, and where approximately 10,000 people work,” writes the [Regional Plan Association](#), an urban planning think tank, in a [new report](#) published in December. Yet these daunting numbers refer only to those stakeholders literally in the water’s path; many thousands more will suffer its effects as rising seas break apart communities and compound the social and economic stresses many vulnerable people already face. The RPA has partnered with the [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#) and the [Consensus Building Institute](#) to co-create municipal planning tools focused on the impacts of climate change. But given the vast reach of sea-level rise, planners must look outward for paths forward. They must respond to a growing sense of planning fatigue by reinventing the ways they entrust and engage their constituents. Toward these ends, I have been working with the RPA to integrate

story-based engagement methods
into [their work on sea-level rise](#).

Together we have designed a game and short-story exercises that respond to proposed 50-year plans. The projects have revealed new risks and opportunity spaces for addressing long-term adaptation outside traditional debates about infrastructure. One short story, for example, raised the issue of elder care and isolation in a future where residents are allowed to raise their homes despite a municipality withdrawing services. As a Tishman Center Scholar, I am prototyping ways to push further these tools for collaborative planning. In the Spring, 360°-cameras in tow, I will be facilitating filmmaking workshops in Sea Bright and Mastic Beach Village. Resident participants will work with scriptwriters and planners to create and film stories focused on the future of their communities. The projects will provide yet-untold grassroots media about these places' uncertain future. Through these films, residents will discuss with each other and present to planners a deeply human set of priorities and preferences. *Corey Chao is a graduate student in the Transdisciplinary Design program at [Parsons School of Design](#).*

