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# Amityville to repair or replace 22 bulkheads for resiliency

August 14, 2016 By Nicholas Spangler [nicholas.spangler@newsday.com](mailto:nicholas.spangler@newsday.com)



Amityville resident Chris Carman shows the need for bulkheads outside his home on Aug. 4, 2016. He says the NY Rising storm resiliency projects are necessary for the village. (Credit: Newsday / J. Conrad Williams Jr.)

Four years after superstorm Sandy, a \$3 million NY Rising Community Reconstruction project in Amityville Village will repair or build 22 municipal bulkheads intended to preserve the shoreline.

The project, developed by village residents led by Ken Budd, an engineer, along with state experts, is scheduled to go out to bid in the fall and work could be completed before the year's end.

“The result will be repaired and higher bulkheads to alleviate the street flooding that we are plagued by,” Mayor James Wandell said. “This is a very good thing for Amityville that saves taxpayers major money.”

For decades, bulkheads — barriers often made of treated lumber and placed along the shoreline — have hardened Amityville's densely built waterfront, an area laced with canals and creeks that bring the Great South Bay north to Merrick Road.

But a succession of storms in 2011, followed by superstorm Sandy a year later, showed the community was vulnerable to flooding. Sandy's 8-foot tidal surge flooded hundreds of homes, commercial properties, municipal parcels and roads.

Bulkhead damage later also contributed to chronic flooding south of Merrick Road, according to a 2014 NY Rising Community Reconstruction Village of Amityville/Copiague Planning Committee report.

The new vinyl bulkheads are expected to last 50 years and will be built with catch basins for better drainage. Saltwater grasses planted alongside will help lock down soil behind the barriers.

Longtime waterfront residents such as Chris Carman, a planning committee member, say they are still waiting for storm drain improvements, another NY Rising project planned for the area, but support the construction as a move that's "got to be done."

Bulkheads are not a perfect solution, though. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation warns on its website that "hard" techniques for shoreline protection such as adding bulkheads can increase erosion nearby and destroy shoreline ecosystems. The DEC generally recommends "softer" techniques for shoreline protection, such as planting stabilizing vegetation, according to a spokesman.

Softer techniques weren't appropriate for Amityville, said Tom King, environmental director of the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery.

"There's not room for the softer approach because the village is built right out to shoreline," he said. Planners also had to preserve area boating channels, he said.

Even improved bulkheads will not inoculate Amityville and other waterfront communities from the next superstorm, said Ali Farhadzadeh, a certified floodplain manager and an assistant professor in Stony Brook University's Civil Engineering Department and the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences.

"It sounds like you're sitting in a sinking boat, and you want to build a wall around yourself, thinking you're going to be saved by this type of protection," he said, citing New York State projections that area sea level will rise 11 to 21 inches by 2050 and 21 to 50 inches by 2100. "The whole area is going to be impacted."

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