

throughout the Southeastern US, as well as the impact of Hurricane Sandy in the Northeastern US, led to a unique offering of grants and financial support from government agencies to prevent flooding. Beach renourishment received significant funding following Irma, according to Shawn Gillen, the current Tybee Island city manager. This involved pumping 1.3 million cubic yards of sand under the beach to better secure it, along with the reinforcement of the dune system on the island which was designed by environmental engineers and closed the vehicular access gaps.

This was essential because the beach and dunes are essential in absorbing the impact of the storm surge. "This goes back to Hurricane Sandy. We learned lessons from the communities that didn't want dunes and were wiped out," said Gillen. "The buildings were still standing in communities that had dunes."

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Developing a sea rise level plan is only part of the process. Once a plan is developed, it is essential that it is implemented. The initial plan focused primarily on strategies to adapt to life on the island with sea level rise. Based on the numerous community engagement strategies, the plan included five concrete actions for the island to take: elevating the municipal well pumps, elevating US Highway 80 causeway, retrofitting low-lying storm water infrastructure, and enhanced beach nourishment.

The storms in 2016 and 2017, along with higher than usual tides in 2015, ignited community momentum for the plan, along with state, federal, and private funding opportunities for the projects. "The funding that those hurricanes allowed them to implement many of the recommendations that we provided," Gambill said. "I think just having people experience firsthand the impacts of flooding influenced public support for implementing different ideas within the plan." Other things that led to the successful implementation were community members who championed the cause and having an organization like Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant to help keep the conversation going.

Five years later, Tybee Island has executed almost every recommendation in the plan. In addition to the beach nourishment grants following Hurricanes Matthew and Irma, Tybee Island also received a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant to elevate homes that were in the floodplain on the marsh side of the island. As a method of last resort, for interested residents, the town is considering buying property in frequent flood areas and converting them into green spaces.

The one piece still missing from completing the plan is the elevation of US 80 that connects Tybee Island to the mainland. Currently, the bridges and causeways are narrow 2-lane roads with very few shoulders for emergencies. Complicated by its location near several wildlife preserves and the Fort Pulaski National Monument, the