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Government Challenges, Your Solutions

WINNER PROFILE

Meet: Lauren Elachi, Pippa Brashear, Gena Wirth and Kate Orff of SCAPE / Landscape Architecture, New York, New York (shown with Allegra Fuller Snyder, far left, founder of Buckminster Fuller Institute)

The Challenge: Rebuild By Design

The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department launched this challenge in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, partnering with philanthropic, academic, and nonprofit organizations to promote innovative solutions that increased resilience in the region battered by the storm.

The Prize:

$60 million (awarded to New York State Governor's Office of Storm Recovery for implementation of the winning project)

The Solution:

SCAPE led a team of experts to produce Living Breakwaters, a multi-faceted approach to building resiliency along the South Shore of Staten Island, which is vulnerable to wave action and erosion. The project combines coastal infrastructure, habitat enhancement, and community engagement, and links in-water protection to on-shore interventions.

For More About the Winner:

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SUCCESS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

How has participating in this challenge helped you advance your solution?

The award to our Living Breakwaters team created the opportunity to develop and implement a large-scale coastal green infrastructure project. The award has fostered a regulatory and political environment in which a commitment to innovation and design thinking is valued, and engaged interdisciplinary teams in designing multi-purpose infrastructure. In addition to being a Rebuild by Design Finalist, the Living Breakwaters Project was awarded the 2014 Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award, which enabled our practice to advance innovative, research-driven design.

What is the impact of your solution for government, your community, and society?

Award of funding by HUD to the N.Y. State Governor's Office of Storm Recovery has opened up a new way of thinking about hybrid green and grey infrastructure. In addition to reducing risk, enhancing coastal ecology, and fostering social resilience along the south shore of Staten Island, the scaleable project will create a precedent for the use of coastal green infrastructure in urban environments. This approach can pave the way for future projects to combine risk reduction, ecological performance, and community benefits. In an age of increasingly limited resources and growing uncertainty, such multi-purpose infrastructure projects will be important. HUD has made a commitment to resilience and to a new way of evaluating and advancing projects that may enable more multi-functional solutions.

GSA