

Development of a Groundbreaking Sea Level Strategy Plan for the City for Charleston

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The City of Charleston has had a special relationship with water since it's founding in 1670. This relationship has shaped and defined the development of the City. Flooding and sea level rise are challenges the City of Charleston has taken seriously for centuries. However, the City of Charleston is experiencing the effects more frequently than ever. In the 1970s Charleston experienced an average of 2 days of tidal flooding per year and it is projected that the city could experience 180 days of tidal flooding in 2045.

Since 2013, the City of Charleston staff, representing various areas of expertise, including engineering, planning, sustainability, emergency management and information technology, began the process of analyzing the potential for sea level rise in the Charleston region and its impact. The staff started by exploring efforts used by other jurisdictions, meeting with other groups concerned about sea level rise in our region and collaborating with City department directors.

World class initiatives by other communities were reviewed as new initiatives were developed to ensure that the City of Charleston anticipates and puts into place actions to reinvest, to be ready and to respond rapidly to the challenges of sea level rise. Many of the initiatives identified are already underway and will be accomplished within the next two years. Others need to be evaluated and prioritized over the coming years and funded over the coming decades.

In December of 2015, the city unveiled a Sea Level Strategy Plan to inform and provide an overall strategy and guiding framework to protect lives and property, maintain a thriving economy, and improve quality of life by making the City more resilient to sea level rise and recurrent flooding. This presentation will discuss this plan.