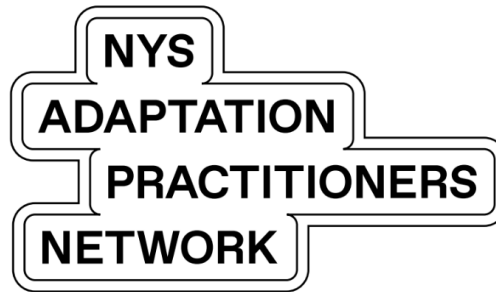


**REBUILD
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NEW YORKERS FACE ALARMING COST OF CLIMATE CHANGE: HALF A TRILLION IN SPENDING NEEDS

The highest cost of adaptation is in NYC, where the per capita need is approximately \$50,000 – double the statewide average of \$26,000.

July 23, 2026 – A first-of-its-kind statewide inventory of known public sector climate adaptation costs finds that New York State and municipalities will need to spend **\$519 billion** of taxpayer dollars to build, upgrade, or retrofit infrastructure through 2050. The report, [*Paying for Resilience in NYS*](#), identifies adaptation costs of proposed, in-progress, and completed adaptation investments. The report, compiled by [Rebuild by Design](#), in collaboration with the [New York State Adaptation Practitioner's Network](#), shows the urgent need to invest in climate adaptation and risk reduction: not doing so will cost taxpayers more in the long run.

"Taxpayers will be on the hook for more than half a trillion dollars," said **Amy Chester, Director of Rebuild by Design**. "Across New York State, communities have identified projects to reduce flood risk, address extreme heat, strengthen infrastructure, and prepare for future conditions, but the needs in this analysis far exceed the resources available. These costs get passed on to families in the form of tax increases, insurance hikes, damages, home repairs, and business losses, if we do not invest proactively."

The findings underscore the enormous scale of the challenge facing New York as communities contend with worsening floods, extreme heat, coastal erosion, stronger storms, and aging infrastructure. These changes cause negative health impacts, school closures, housing instability, crop failure, supply chain disruptions, and economic fragility.

Key Findings:

- The per capita statewide cost of adaptation infrastructure is approximately \$26,000.
- New York City's per capita cost is \$50,000, the highest among all regions.
- The most expensive adaptation projects are sewer and stormwater upgrades and coastal defense on Long Island and in New York City.
- The true cost is unknown. Most communities across the state do not have the capacity or resources to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment.

The estimate reflects only known and documented infrastructure needs as of July 2026. The true cost would account for current and future inflation, ongoing maintenance costs, and the long-term financial consequences of delaying resilient infrastructure investments, as climate events continue to impact New York State. Every \$1 not invested in disaster resilience today can cost communities up to \$33 in lost future economic activity, according to the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#). Furthermore, as credit rating agencies [increasingly incorporate](#) climate risk and resilience planning into municipal bond ratings, communities that fail to invest in resilient infrastructure may face higher borrowing costs, making it more expensive to finance the infrastructure investments they will inevitably need.

"This analysis underscores the looming New York taxpayer costs resulting from a worsening climate. New York, and other states, are trying to offset some of those expenses onto the phenomenally-profitable fossil fuel industries. If the Trump Administration, and the other allies of the fossil fuel industries, have their way, taxpayers will have to choke down 100% of climate damages. The choice is clear: protect Big Oil or protect taxpayers. This report underscores why that choice is so important," said **Blair Horner, Senior Policy Advisor, NYPIRG**.

Recommendations from Rebuild by Design and the NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network call on New York State to: invest further in building local capacity to plan and implement resilience projects; complete its statewide adaptation and resilience plan; strengthen permitting requirements for new structures and projects in accordance with future climate conditions; and design new infrastructure assets to address multiple hazards and create co-benefits to ensure invested dollars are stretched the furthest.

Diminishing Resources: Superfund Under Fire, Funding Needs Renewal

New York State is running out of resources to address this challenge. In 2022, voters approved a \$4.2 billion [Environmental Bond Act](#) that has already allocated \$2.2 billion to projects across the state. While the Bond Act has provided critical support, it represents only a fraction of the identified needs. When this money runs out communities will need to find new sources of public funding and financing for adaptation projects. Simultaneously, federal resources have continued to shrink.

In 2024, New York State passed the [Climate Change Superfund Law](#) which "require(s) companies that have contributed significantly to the buildup of climate-warming greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to bear a share of the costs of needed infrastructure investments to adapt to climate change". It is estimated that fossil fuel companies will be responsible for \$75

billion to offset costs to New York State. However, 22 states and Industry filed lawsuits challenging the law, the Trump Administration issued an [executive order](#) to halt the enforcement of such state climate laws, and Congressional Republicans introduced [legislation](#) that aims to void state-level fossil fuel polluter-pays laws. Without adequate resources to meet adaptation needs, households will face growing financial pressures as communities struggle to repair, upgrade, and protect critical infrastructure.

The analysis compiled over 700 projects and plans identifying needs funded or scoped through federal, state, and local programs through desktop research and was informed by expertise of climate adaptation practitioners statewide. The research includes initiatives addressing: storm surge and sea level rise; erosion; grid resilience; stormwater management and green infrastructure; shoreline and habitat restoration; disaster preparedness and resilience hubs; heat mitigation; wind and storm damage protection; flood risk reduction; sewer upgrades; and other weather-related hazard mitigation measures.

Adaptation costs vary greatly across geographies, with New York City being the highest. New York City faces higher adaptation costs due to high construction and labor costs, limited space for nature-based solutions, and the complexity of protecting dense populations and interconnected underground infrastructure systems. New York City also faces significant vulnerability because of its coastline, concentration of people and critical assets, severity of stormwater flooding, urban heat, and other climate hazards. In addition, New York City has more comprehensive planning and cost estimates than many communities in the state who have not yet fully assessed their risks or identified and scoped needed interventions due to capacity constraints. Small municipalities have limited staff and budget, which makes planning and implementing these kinds of infrastructure projects challenging.

"There is currently no comprehensive statewide adaptation plan for New York State," says **Riobart Breen, Director of the Institute for Transformational and Ecosystem-based Climate Adaptation at the University at Albany**, "Without guidance and standards from a high-quality statewide plan, communities are left to develop incomplete, uncoordinated and often under-resourced strategies for climate adaptation, resulting in uneven and inadequate levels of resilience and adaptation across the state."

"This adds to what we already know: spending a lot of money is not a choice – we have to do that anyway. Our choice is whether or not to spend on actions that prepare us for the future we are actually going to face. To do that we need a plan that highlights how climate resilience is beneficial and economical for all New Yorkers," adds **Brian Rahm, Director of the New York Water Resources Institute at Cornell University**.

[Rebuild by Design](#) is housed at the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University and works with communities and local governments to co-design policies, projects, and programs to adapt to the worsening impacts of extreme weather.

The New York State Adaptation Practitioners Network brings together more than 140 members representing every county in New York—representing nonprofits, community-based organizations, academic institutions, and state agencies working across disciplines. The Network informs policy, shares knowledge, and builds the partnerships needed to advance climate adaptation across the state.

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