Terry Mazany

Natural Resources Branch April Meeting

April 21st, 2023

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Introductions

Recovery Task Force Meeting Updates

Problem Solving Process

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Introductions

Membership:

- **Branch Lead:**
  - Dan DeLisi
- **Branch Members:**
  - Daniel Andrews
  - Ryan Berger
  - Chadd Chustz
  - Matt DePaolis
  - James Evans
  - Kate Gooderham
  - Joanne Ribble
  - Dr. Maya Robert
  - Dr. Mary Beth Saunders
  - Jesse Sorrells
  - Casey Streeter
  - Matt Caldwell

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Introductions

Branch Meeting Support Team

Facilitator(s)

- Terry Mazany

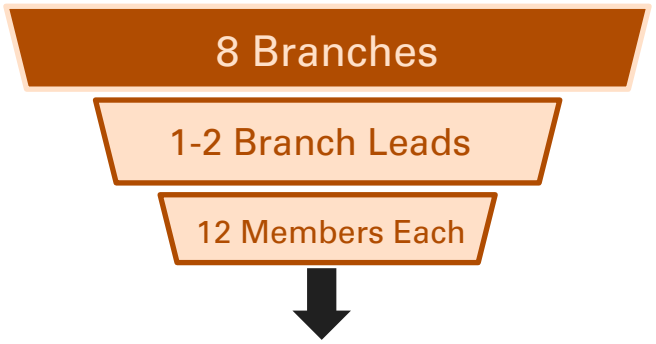
Branch Support

- Robbie Heere

Recovery Task Force Membership

Agency	Position	Representative
Board of County Commissioners	Commissioner	Kevin Ruane, Chair
City of Bonita Springs	Councilman	Chris Corrie
City of Cape Coral	Mayor	John Gunter
Village of Estero	Mayor	Jon McLain
City of Fort Myers	Mayor	Kevin Anderson
Town of Fort Myers Beach	Councilman	Bill Veach
City of Sanibel	Councilwoman	Holly Smith
Law Enforcement	Undersheriff	John Holloway
Lehigh Acres Fire District	Fire Chief	Robert Dilallo
Lee County School Board	Chairman	Armor Persons
Lee Health	Board Member	David Collins
Legislative Delegation	Representative	Jenna Persons-Mulicka
Constitutional Office	Property Appraiser	Matt Caldwell

RTF Structure: Branches



- Meet monthly
- Resolve emergent issues by developing short-term tactical action plans
- Survey immediate, short-term, and long-term needs of Lee County
- Identify key partners able to address the needs of the community
- Develop viable, feasible, desirable, and actionable solutions to meet needs
- Maximize funding resources and implement solutions
- Recommend policies necessary to implement solutions

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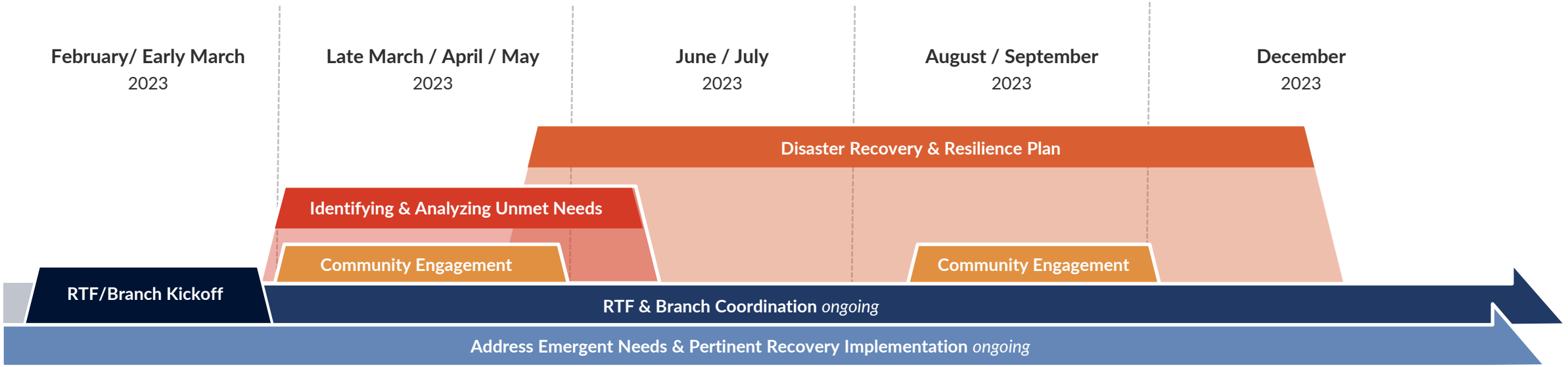
High Level Process for Long-term Recovery Planning



RTF / Branch Kickoff

Establish the working structure for RTF and launch branches. Identify immediate needs and goals to address.

Launch website.

RTF & Branch Coordination

Identify recovery objectives; inform impact and needs assessment; establish projects; incorporate community's priorities; inform long term planning; oversee recovery plan implementation

Identifying & Analyzing Unmet Needs

Hurricane Ian storm impact analysis, and a cursory look at outstanding needs that will begin to shape recovery priorities

Community Engagement*

Comprehensive community outreach to inform and validate needs, identify solutions, and validate planning.

Hurricane Ian Disaster Recovery & Resilience Plan

A framework for Lee County's recovery from Hurricane Ian, including prioritized projects, funding sources, and key stakeholders

Emergent Needs & Pertinent Recovery Implementation

Conduct recovery operations and manage recovery funding streams: short-term, intermediate, long-term.

RTF is forum to identify emergent and time sensitive needs and identifying best path forward.

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Branch Priorities

Branches	Branch Priorities/Initial Themes
Planning & Capacity 	• Plan for improved short-term recovery response (immediately post-disaster) • Increase inter-governmental coordination for long-term planning for resiliency • Propose planning community priorities based on those hardest hit
Economic Recovery 	• Identify partnerships and incentives supporting the workforce, such as affordable housing near jobs • Identify Short-term actions that support the rapid recovery of businesses, including access to financing, and marketing the tourism-based economy • Rebuild more public access to natural resources • Prioritize industry-sector growth to build a resilient economy
Education & Workforce 	• Improve workforce participation by increasing skilled and credentialed workers to fill jobs in Lee County • Create ways to partner and leverage resources to increase shared ownership of education, to improve outcomes and opportunities from early childhood education to career • Create systems that foster lifelong learning and training opportunities for all • Address outside variables (housing, transportation, mental health, childcare, etc.) that hinder education and workforce
Health & Social Services 	• Access through mobile services and for special needs environments that includes necessary services and accessibility to facilities built to provide services, pharmacies, mental health services • Coordination of a resilience hub with dependable and real time information and based on prior mapping critical care infrastructure • Identify mental health responses in real-time, especially one-year anniversaries, with support for staff and considerations for workforce retention and well-being • Identify regulatory requirements for special services and supportive living centers, options for providers

Branch Priorities

Branches	Branch Priorities/Initial Themes
Infrastructure	• Preserve and harden critical infrastructure such as water, power, transportation, communications and sanitary infrastructure systems • Pre-disaster planning for supplies, evacuation, and shelter, especially for special needs during emergencies fuel, and cascading points of failure of weak links • Address increased shelter needs and return to normal operations for schools • Identify redundancy in infrastructure, systems, and partnerships, and sharing assets among jurisdictions and outside areas • Determine long-term improvements for livability
Housing	• Deregulation to reduce costs of housing and consistency of codes and permitting for efficiency • Zoning changes to comprehensive planning that increases density and redevelopment • Address housing issues and development incentives for vulnerable populations and communities
Natural Resources	• Determine regulatory actions and incentives to address impacts of natural resources • Direct actions to improve hydrological and ecological conditions • Create public education and awareness campaigns to reduce the impact on natural resources
Cultural Resources	• Identify short-term recovery and stabilization of the arts • Convene the arts community supporting cultural facilities and individual artists • Identify regional cultural planning and representation for the arts

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Meeting Purpose

1. What other information do you need to design, identify, or evaluate solutions in this space? Are there information gaps?
2. Are there other experts, organizations, or institutions you would like to hear from?
3. What kinds of solutions are you already considering for exploration?

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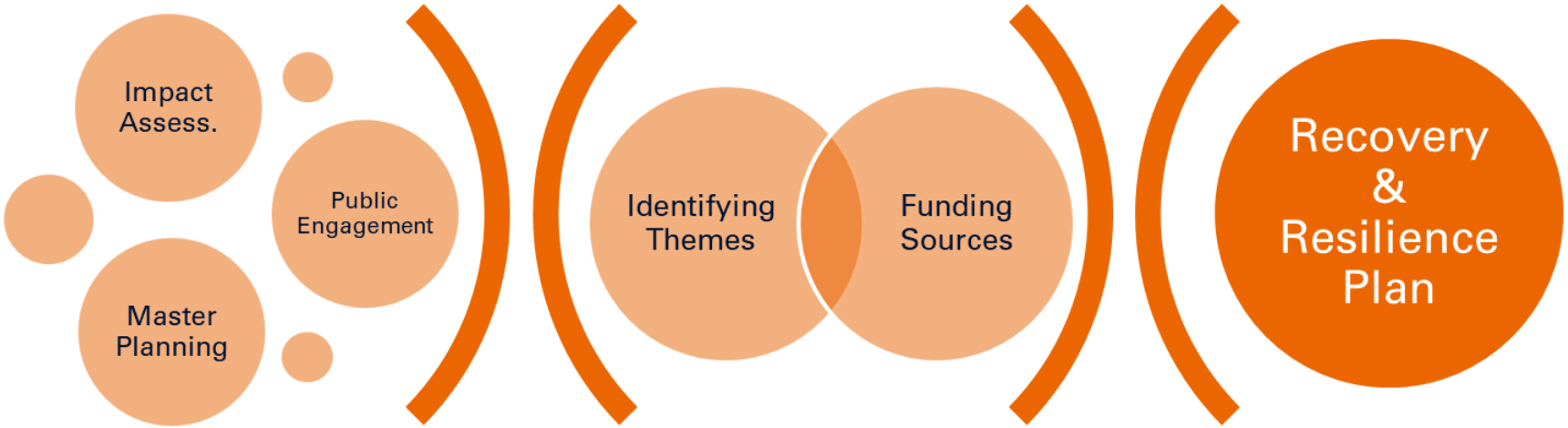
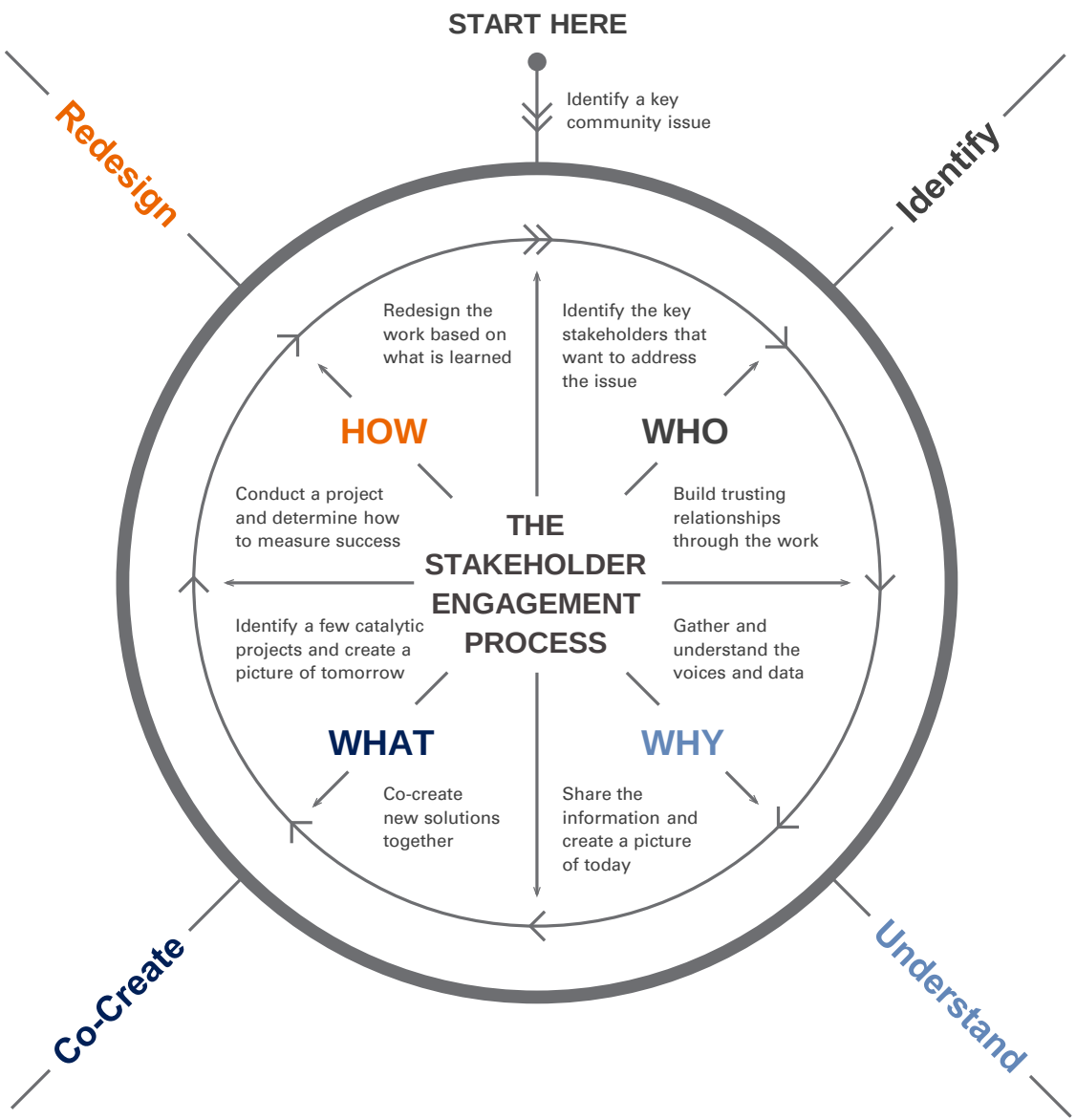
Overview of Branch Problem Solving Process



Process


START HERE
Identify a key community issue
Identify
Identify the key stakeholders that want to address the issue
WHO
Build trusting relationships through the work
Understand
Gather and understand the voices and data
WHY
Share the information and create a picture of today
Co-Create
Co-create new solutions together
WHAT
Identify a few catalytic projects and create a picture of tomorrow
Redesign
HOW
Conduct a project and determine how to measure success
Redesign the work based on what is learned
THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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Priority 1 Key Challenges and Needs

Direct actions to improve hydrological and ecological conditions

- Hurricane Ian was destructive to many elements of the region's ecology, destroying reefs and mangroves, both of which provide natural lines of defense against water.
  - Both sensitive ecological features can take years to reform from damage incurred by a major storm.
- Hurricane Ian damaged Lee County's beaches and sensitive ecosystems with storm debris, pollution, and the removal of healthy, safe sand and dune vegetation.
- Lee County currently estimates renourishing its beaches, including the Town of Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel Island, will require approximately $50 million.
- Hurricane Ian brought red tide, the harmful algae blooms that kill fish and birds.
- The Lee County portion of the dockside value is around $30 million with losses that could total over $20 million.
- Lee County communities have been subject to several water quality alerts and swimming restrictions.

Priority 1 Key Findings

Beach renourishment and dune restoration

- An effort to renourish hard hit areas is supported by a $5 million grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. It is unclear what federal funding streams can be utilized for beach nourishment projects.

Mangrove Restoration

- Cleaning mangroves will help reduce the impact of any potential toxins or chemicals from garbage on the environment and wildlife.

Natural Infrastructure Benefits

- A healthy coral reef can reduce wave energy by up to 97%.
- Coastal wetlands provide storm protection valued at $23.2 billion per year in the United States.
- Coastal restoration could be a means to provide jobs for residents needing an opportunity.

Water Quality and Quantity

- $10 million was awarded to the Florida Governmental Utility Authority to help transition two Southwest Florida communities off septic systems and onto sewer systems.

Key Research

- The Economic Impacts of Saltwater Fishing in Florida – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Disaster Recovery and Resilience – The Nature Conservancy
- News articles regarding beach renourishment, water contamination, and red tide

Priority 2 Key Challenges and Needs

Determine regulatory actions and incentives to address impacts on natural resources

- A third of all homes in Florida use septic tanks.
  - Estimates in Lee County alone range from 100,000 to 200,000.
  - Septic tank effluent provides “superfood” for harmful algal blooms (HABs), including the dreaded red tides and seagrass-smothering macro-algae species.
  - Pathogens in sewage also threaten the health of humans and wildlife.
- Sewage contamination is a major water-quality issue in the Caloosahatchee River Basin.
- Groundwater and surface water in North Fort Myers are coupled and contaminated by septic system effluent, which is negatively affecting water quality and contributing to the maintenance and intensification of downstream pollution.

Priority 2 Key Findings

Water Quality

- The Countywide Septic Conversion Plan (CSCP) will evaluate the number of on-site septic systems and future population projection demands in order to provide a list of capital improvement projects to support septic conversion.
  - Executing these projects on an advanced schedule could be a possible route to increased water quality resilience.

Incentives

- Lee County requires that only clean water can enter its waterways and has some supporting regulations for property owners, but some cities and counties have found value in extensive stormwater management programs that incentivize property owners to install mitigation features.

Natural Infrastructure Benefits

- Cape Coral's Utilities Expansion Project has converted nearly all homes south of Pine Island Road to city water and sewer.

Key Research

- Lee County – Countywide Wastewater Management Report
- News article on State of Florida promoting key Recovery Programs available to homes and businesses impacted by Hurricane Ian
- News articles on water quality issues and improvements

Priority 3 Key Challenges and Needs

Public education and awareness campaigns to reduce impact on natural resources

- Lee County has a high number of new residents joining the community who are not aware of the many connections between human activity, the ecosystem, and the region's resilience.
- Lee County is growing and the rapid growth and new goals around density may need to be balanced with the need to protect natural resources.
  - The conversation around protecting resources would be best supported by the inclusion of regulators, developers, scientists, and residents.
- More resources may be necessary to involve the large and diverse population in the protection of the region's natural resources.

Priority 3 Key Findings

- Lee County is growing. The Lee Plan projects that in 2045, the County will be home to 1,056,600 permanent residents and an additional 18% seasonal residents.
  - The development pressures noted by environmental scientists are likely to increase.
- Lee County has several efforts engaged in multifaceted education and awareness campaigns that could be expanded or considered for replication.
  - The Lee County Water Initiative
  - The Calusa Waterkeeper, Inc.
  - The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau

Key Research

- The Lee Plan – Lee County
- Lee County – Our Water Story
- Tourism and Conservation: Sustainable Models and Strategies

Government Agency Program Examples

There are many government agencies with programs that support or could support elements of natural resource restoration, public education, and assessment. A few examples are:

- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** provides funding to restore habitat and facilities damaged by the storms to ensure delivery of natural resource management missions and helps fund coastal resilience projects.
- **Department of the Interior** provides funding to rebuild and restore facilities and habitat managed by the agency that were damaged during the hurricanes and invest in conservation and restoration work on public lands to enhance resilience.
- **Army Corps of Engineers** conducts studies to survey coasts and water resources and encourages use of nature-based solutions and enhance resilience in post-storm projects.
- **Environmental Protection Agency** incorporates natural infrastructure into State Revolving Fund investments to repair and rebuild wastewater and drinking water facilities in impacted areas and increased funding for Clean Water Act Section 319 grants to reduce pollution and reduce flood risk.
- **Department of Agriculture** provides direct funds allowing for urban buyout programs and restoration of land to a natural, flood-resilient state.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency** maximizes the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, provides funding to help communities invest in risk reduction efforts, including buyout programs, and expedites a portion of these funds to be spent sooner than a year post-disaster to provide communities access to the full range of recovery options without delay.
- **Department of Housing and Urban Development** invests a significant portion of the Community Development Block Grants for disaster recovery and facilitates investments in resilience.

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Key Research

- Disaster Recovery and Resilience – The Nature Conservancy

Meeting Recap

1. What other information do you need to design, identify, or evaluate solutions in this space? Are there information gaps?
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Calendar of Meetings	
Date	**Time**
Friday, April 21, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, May 12, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, June 9, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, June 16, 2023 (as needed)	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, July 14, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, July 21, 2023 (as needed)	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, August 4, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, August 18, 2023 (as needed)	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, September 8, 2023	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Friday, September 22, 2023 (as needed)	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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Discussion and Questions

Discussion to close after final member questions, before opening to Public Comment.

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- Research and Data
- Discussion and Questions
- Next Steps
- **Public Comment**

Public Comment

Adjourn

Email: info@resilientlee.org

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