SIGHTFUL

MOBILIZING MIAMI FOR SEA LEVEL RISE

Embodied Research

JUNE-AUGUST 2016
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To help The Miami Foundation prioritize policy and action recommendations for local governments to adapt for sea-level rise in Miami; and to develop guidelines for culturally-responsive messaging to engage residents in advocating for action.
The Process

01 Media Audit
Overview of current media related to Miami Sea-Level Rise and Climate Communications

02 Thought Leader Interviews
Interviews with five Miami influencers deeply engaged with the issue of SLR

03 5 Embodied Focus Groups
Business Community Frontlines
High Risk/Socioeconomically Vulnerable Political Influencers Millennials

04 Insights Workshop
City officials and influencers engaged with the issue of SLR come together to learn, share and hone in on solutions.

Distribution of Findings, Next Steps...
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
Top 5 TakeAways

1. We still have an awareness issue.
   Many people in Miami don’t understand the complexity or scale of the SLR problem. Some due to language barriers; some due to denial or fear; some due to their focus on more pressing needs.

2. We need “the opposite of panic.”
   People agree that it’s unwise to wait to act until disaster strikes. Coordinated communication on what actions are being taken and what is still necessary could improve confidence and increase engagement.

   Skepticism about the capacity of city/county officials to prioritize this and handle it is high. Economically-vulnerable communities especially, feel disconnected from decision-making. And many feel powerless in the face of entrenched commercial and political interests.

4. Seeing this as an opportunity is motivating.
   The idea of taking this as an opportunity to embrace change and become a model “City of the Future” was a popular and motivating meme. Innovation and imagination can thrive in the face of the crisis. The business community, especially appreciated this call-to-action.

5. Water is the problem and the solution.
   Protecting the water supply was the policy action of highest priority—something for all to rally around. Water unites Miamians and is a great democratizer. The answer lies in “living with water” in new ways.
Top 5 Communication Recommendations

1. Less doom and gloom.
   Tell people what’s happening and what they can do about it. A good rule of thumb for messaging is 1/3 “fear” for urgency + 2/3 “hope” to motivate and empower.

2. Have frequent, genuine conversations.
   Public meetings, town halls, collaborative decision-making technologies, social media…the more transparent, open, and two-way the conversation, the better. We need unlikely advocates and more inclusive forums to reach more people quickly.

3. Clear leadership and accountability.
   Who is doing what? What has been done? What are other cities doing? Who can step up and take charge? People are looking for fearless leadership and trustworthy sources. This must not get mired in political angling and partisanship. We must demonstrate a willingness to rise above pettiness.

4. Engage artists, activists, youth and elders.
   Storytelling, art, and self-expression are critical to engaging the public. Hack-A-Thons, public performance, and other creative means of communication are essential to educating and including the whole community effectively. Call on citizens to help solve this!

5. Need a real vision and plan of action.
   Where are we headed? The clearer the long-term vision for the city, the more courage and conviction we will see in personal and professional decisions about staying, investing, building a city of the future…
We need a clear vision for the future of Miami; a coordinated plan for getting there; and effective dialogue that brings the community along and keeps everyone engaged.
MEDIA AUDIT AND INTERVIEWS
Media

Thought Leaders

Nicole Hernandez Hammer
Southeast Climate Advocate at Union of Concerned Scientists

Rebekah Monson
Cofounder, WhereBy.Us
Cofounder, The New Tropic

Jack Lowell
Executive Vice President at Colliers International

Javier Soto
President and CEO of The Miami Foundation

Caroline Lewis
Founder and Executive Director at The CLEO Institute
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"As a resident of Miami, I'm part of a family and a community, and I'm learning the science. I'm also considering the people aspect. This is about communities as much as it is about my own life," Fletcher said. "I've been working and trying to figure out how we make sure Miami is taking bold action around adjusting and adapting to climate change. How do we get people involved on every level of society — economic, racial, age? How do we get everyone involved?"
“The opportunity here is for Miami to be a think tank and experimental ground that can help other cities facing the same thing. This is a service to future generations.”

– Caroline Lewis, CLEO Institute
“Don’t just tell people ‘you’re vulnerable.’ Tell them what they can do!”

– Caroline Lewis, CLEO Institute
“We’ll look back 20 years from now and we’ll be complicit if we don’t act.”

–Javier Soto, The Miami Foundation
“Those of us who are doubling down on what we’re putting into this city...People think we’re sort of crazy.”

– Rebecca Monson, The New Tropic
“This is an actual business opportunity if approached the right way.”

– Jack Lowell, Colliers International
“The economic impact for communities is the next big aspect of this story. This will affect everyone.”

– Javier Soto, The Miami Foundation
“There are big gaps in communication and understanding...Government doesn't understand equity issues. Scientists don’t understand financial issues. Low income communities don’t understand day-to-day realities of climate change. There is not one shared story about the future of Miami.”

–Nicole Hernandez Hammer, Union of Concerned Scientists
WHAT WE LEARNED IN THE GROUPS
THE 5 GROUPS

BUSINESS COMMUNITY
- Business leaders: real estate, hospitality, finance

FRONTLINES
- People who live on the geographic frontline

ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE
- Community organizers from low income neighborhoods

POLITICAL INFLUENCERS
- Community leaders who influence blocks of people

MILLENNIALS
- 20-34 year-old engaged Miamians
WHAT THE SESSIONS LOOKED LIKE

3 HOURS

Creating the Space
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- PERSONAL INTRODUCTIONS
- MINDFULNESS-BASED PRACTICES
- HAND-SELECTED PARTICIPANTS
- MAKING COMMITMENTS

Where We Stand
KINESTHETIC DATA VISUALIZATION

- TESTING CONCEPTS THROUGH MOVEMENT. EVERY BODY BECOMES A DATA POINT
- CONVERSATION HAPPENS IN TRANSPARENCY

Brainstorming
MAKING MATERIAL RELEVANT

- EDUCATION COMPONENT
- GROUP CREATIVE EXERCISE: CREATE A CAMPAIGN FOR 4 POLICY PLANS
What can I do to combat feelings of helplessness?

Why are folks so complacent? As though things were OK?

I would like the business community to become more engaged in this discussion and to help us think outside the box to develop solutions.

How do I talk to people about climate change & SCR without causing people to shut down & instead take action?

Will the county prioritize equity?

Who will pay for this? How?

What can I do to educate our community?

How do we share info with communities?

SAVE OUR WET BUTTS!
Business Community

Immediate action on SLR is an investment in Miami’s future.

Inaction has the potential to devastate us.

Prosperity, Innovation, Stability

Engaging private enterprise in solutions

Keeping Miami competitive/great

Entrepreneurship, innovation

Incentives

Repreadness, risk assessment

Investments, opportunity

Who’s paying?

Panic = collapse, chaos

Effect on taxes

Restrictions, building codes

Too “environmental”

Incentives

Engaging private enterprise in solutions
"Don’t feed fuel to the fear."

“I know what should be done. But do I know how it’s done? No. It’s too complex."

“County gov and 25 separate cities all trying to solve separately. It’s so important for our future to bring us all together to talk about this.”

“There’s nothing more motivating for my clientele than the words capital improvement, infrastructure, and the economic opportunity. The governor loves that. Take out the other words, the reasons why SLR is happening, and replace it with: economic opportunity.”

“I can go back and tell the bank, ‘They’re [Miamians] not in the fetal position under their desks.’"
“We’re too deep in it to see it as an opportunity.”

“We can’t enjoy rain because we are worried a hard fast rain will be in our house. I’ve had 21 inches in my house and lost everything.”

“I won’t allow myself to be constantly worried about it. I have to take time to enjoy the water so I’m not always worried. I see enough of that.”

“We’ve got salt water intrusion in my well…mildew growing behind my walls….We are finding the salt water in our ecological habitat and in cultural resources. Daily I wake up, trying to figure out which of 19 problems to address.”

“When you look at public opinion polls and what politicians are actually doing, there is a disconnect.”

“Individual efforts seem to be more effective then elected officials.”

“It’s not a Miami discussion…It’s the entire Eastern Seaboard….What are we waiting for? We as a country…Are we worth saving?”
We need the opposite of panic because many of us have been dealing with this... I was standing out on the street stopping traffic when the king tide came in... We’ve been dealing with this. I drive a Bronco and a Jeep because it’s part of life.... We need solutions... Not panic.... Everything we’ve worked for for a long time... We need a reasoned approach to maintain what we’ve worked for.... Panic leads to conclusions where people are willing to sacrifice community, diversity, character...."
ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE

TRANSLATED RESOURCES
PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN
LOCAL LEADERSHIP

A SEAT AT THE TABLE, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
LACK OF AWARENESS
DAY-TO-DAY SURVIVAL

CLIMATE GENTRIFICATION
DISTRESS OF THE SYSTEM

SELF-RELIANCE
LOCAL LEADERSHIP, SELF-RELIANCE

COMPASSION
COMMUNITY
EQUITY

WE’RE ALL IN THIS
TOGETHER; WE HAVE A SEAT
AT THE TABLE

POWERLESSNESS THE,
WRITING IS ALREADY
ON THE WALLS
WE HEARD...

“We could be in a Flint situation real quick.” (drinking water crisis)

“The water isn’t at the door yet, but the sharks are already coming.”

“Water is part of my culture...”

“We need to prioritize the people who have the most need, not the most money.”
POLITICAL INFLUENCERS

ARM ME WITH THE BEST INFORMATION AND I WILL SERVE

TOO KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE WEAKNESSES OF THE SYSTEM; CYNICAL
WE HEARD...

“I am concerned that those closest to me don’t understand the scope of the problem. We need to ascertain what messaging is relevant to each set of stakeholders.”

“We need political will...We know the solutions but we don’t do it.”

Cynicism: “Somebody got a contract.” “Same people get elected.” “Nothing ever changes.” “Nothing can happen because of the state government.”

“A group of citizens organized to deliver a message... Elected officials are receptive.”

“Always better to be proactive than reactive. We’re setting ourselves up for a better future. It’s cheaper to be proactive.”
DETERMINED TO MAKE MIAMI A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF

MILLENNIALS

+ 

ENVIRONMENT & WILDLIFE

REAL CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

PEOPLE ARE ASLEEP

CELEBRATION OF REAL HEROES

VISION FOR "CITY OF THE FUTURE"

OPPORTUNITY

CYNICISM

POWERLESSNESS

OVERWHELM

TRANSPARENCY

TECH & INNOVATION

INTERDEPENDENCE

(ENVIRONMENT, TOO)

HEARTBREAK, FRUSTRATION

REAL CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

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VISION FOR "CITY OF THE FUTURE"

OPPORTUNITY
WE HEARD...

“Innovation is a social process. this is an opportunity to democratize innovation.”

“This city is too ‘have and have not’”

“Elected officials don’t purposefully pass the buck, but the amount of municipalities makes it confusing. No one knows who to call in the 34 districts... It’s easy for people to get ignored, confused, and nothing happens.”

“Millennials are leaving regardless of sea level rise. But, that definitely impacts decisions.”

“There is hopefulness...forward momentum in what we want Miami to be.”
EMBODIED RESEARCH
SLR IS URGENT FOR MIAMI

BUSINESS LEADERS

FRONTLINES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AT RISK

INFLUENTIAL

MILLENNIALS
SLR AFFECTS MY DAY TO DAY LIFE

BUSINESS LEADERS

FRONTLINES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AT RISK

INFLUENTIAL

MILLENIALS
I AM CLEAR ABOUT SOLUTIONS AND HOW TO TAKE ACTION NOW

BUSINESS LEADERS

FRONTLINES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AT RISK

INFLUENTIAL

MILLENNIALS
THE WORLD IS WATCHING! WHAT WE DO HERE AND NOW WILL INFLUENCE HOW OTHER CITIES DEAL WITH SLR
SLR PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BUSINESS AND INNOVATION
I HAVE A VOICE! GETTING INVOLVED WITH PUBLIC LEADERS IS VALUABLE
Nearly all agreed that we’ll see impact and need to make significant behavior changes within 10 years.
OVERARCHING INSIGHTS
But first, we still have an awareness issue.
8 INSIGHTS

Fenton’s Law
Living with water
Come together
Only WE questions

Cynicism
Don’t wait for disaster
Envision the future
The 3 C’s
1. Fenton’s Law: 
1/3 fear
2/3 hope
2. Living with water...
3. Come together, right now.
There are only "WE" questions.
Cynicism must be addressed.
6. Don’t wait for disaster.
Envision the future...literally.
8.

3 C’s: Coordinate, Communicate, Celebrate...
EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize

2. Engaging, motivating language and tactics
Universally, the threat of contaminated or no fresh water is impactful to citizens.

Water is life and the reason many people in Miami are here.

A basic need that has nothing to do with class or race, something unifying and motivating.

The Everglades is a specific and effective rally point.
Understand the whole life cycle of water. IDEAS: movies, documentaries, VR films...“Journey of a Drop of Water.” People don’t understand where our water comes from...can we educate in schools, museums, flyers, newspapers, TV, water bill...

Wetlands protect us, so we must protect our wetlands.

Show animals that are threatened.

No drinking water is no joke. Show shower with dirty / salty water

Make the “Foreverglades”

Don’t take water for granted. Hit us on a “gut” level, not intellectual.
PRIORITY #2: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Living with water was a big theme and citizens want to know what this looks like.

Seems to be critical to the future of this city: VISION

Communicating about these initiatives instills confidence and helps people feel secure that gov’t is moving on the issue.

The idea of private partnerships and innovation/entrepreneurship opportunities was popular.
CITIZEN PERSPECTIVES

FL natural habitat is our protector: Mangroves can effortlessly adapt to SLR

Unity is the important message, plus consistency and consensus; decisions need to be in more of a coordinated way

Be transparent about costs

Present parks and public spaces + new ones: Preserve green spaces and increase blue spaces.

Living with nature (acceptance) vs. Fighting it back (controlling)
PRIORITY #3: LAND USE AND BUILDING CODE

Real estate and development are big industry in Miami and also highly visible.

Sentiment that the development community (and codes governing them) should be proactive on SLR in order to avoid disaster.

Time for resistance is past.

Most citizens currently feel powerless on this issue...need ideas to bring more engagement and a sense of accountability.
CITIZEN PERSPECTIVES

Wetlands protect us, so we must protect our wetlands. People come together under unified campaign.

Sensitivity – developers are using SLR to push out lower income residents.

All buildings need to be self-sustaining (water and energy)

Not just seawalls, but living with nature.

Building to last 2050. Instagram # for photos of building safer: #tothecode or #2thecode

Look at building codes that encourage innovation (Portland and Seattle)
"The water hasn't risen yet and the sharks are already at the door."
PRIORITY #4: INSURANCE SECURITY

Lack of funds is a big threat. Will insurance be there when it’s needed?

Potential for panic or economic collapse is clear in business community.

But, few everyday people understand the issue on a macro/systemic level.

Many in poorer communities and also younger people who rent, don’t have or think about insurance at all.
CITIZEN PERSPECTIVES

“Personalizes it all for property owners: “Protect your nest egg.”

Use social media to speak directly to the insurance companies.

Demand more timely understandable information from insurance providers.

Elected officials must intervene on behalf of the uninsured: It’s not ok, and it’s not your fault. We need to advocate for solutions.

“One big storm could be the end of us.”
Continued use of technology, apps, VR, and innovations to change the way we engage with the issue.

Hackathons, contests, play spaces, emergency dress-rehearsals, art and participation.

Enlisting the community and outside experts in the creation of big overall vision and better visualization of data and processes.

Creating tools and messaging that serve all citizens in terms of language and distribution...Also genuine events of inclusion and participatory tools.

What is really at risk? How are decisions made? Where does my drinking water come from?
As an accurate, interactive and easily updatable source of information.

As a tool for bringing more people into the conversation and decision-making.

Inventions and innovations to solve problems long-term.

Governments are notoriously antiquated in their use of technology and social media, but it is a powerful tool in this case.

Maybe this is what private enterprise can offer: what Uber did for public transportation…
PLAY & IMAGINATION

Games and apps where you can visualize Miami Rise (digital platform)

Stepping away from the Doom & Gloom we can emphasize new playspaces and the joys of living with water.

Involve people in contests and challenges that change their behaviors.

“Selfies for Sea Level Rise” - these kinds of games can motivate and raise awareness for the issue and solutions.

Start climate change education from an early age with STEM programs, elementary schools

Hackathons engage more people in solutions
A clear vision is needed for people to work towards, to find alignment...

Give people access to apps that simulate risks to your property: if we do nothing, if we do something

Millennials felt fear and helplessness in the face of the near future

Can we involve citizens in the solution? Artists? Students? Innovators?

What does Miami 2050 look like and how are we going to get there?

This, but for more mass audience >>>
This is no longer the age of top-down decision-making

Tackling this issue could be revolutionary and a real departure from business as usual: through massive community involvement

TRUE EQUITY (not EQUALITY) - giving everyone the same shoe versus giving them the shoe size that fits

EVERYONE has a voice regardless of color, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status...

Events and experiences that demonstrate a commitment to these principles
TRANSPARENCY

Millennials and other community members want more information and transparent communications in order to make the best decisions.

Have a transparency symbol for companies (like B Corp) who are adopting SLR practices.

Expose vested interests.

Get real about the threat without inciting panic.

Simple questions about how the city’s systems work: where does our water come from? How long do we have?
COMMITMENTS
COMMITMENTS FROM RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

PERSONAL PROCESS
Not let fear paralyze me
Keep SLR top-of-mind
Ask the right questions
Educate myself
Walk the walk
Get on mailing lists
Keep positive vision of Miami

AWARENESS
Talking to friends and family
Talk to my children
Share with groups I belong to
Bring it to my neighborhood association
Start a dialogue with developers
Keep writing about it publicly
Use social media to spread word

SOLUTIONS
Educate Democratic candidates
Call or write my elected officials
Girls camp: have the girls build an app
Mock up the app we created here
Invite you all to my event
Invite you to be on our radio show
Talk to Mayor Stoddard to host community gatherings
Promote SLR PSAs when they cross my desk
On June 20, 2016 we held a four-hour work session for SLR decision-makers, policy-makers, subject-matter experts and communication professionals in Miami-Dade.

We shared insight and gathered additional input to crystallize the findings.
RESPONSES

“Thanks for making this tangible…turning the abstract into concrete. We hear/talk about this a lot. It can get heady and we lose sight of how to act. This was different!!” – Loren Parra, Regional Director, Office of Senator Bill Nelson

“We need media to understand their impact. We need an informed public taking educated action. Without that, the conversation is based on fear and anger and frustration and it leads to inaction.” – Andrea Christina Ruiz

“Is SLR a better communication tool and call-to-action than increasing urban temperatures and urban heat? Increasing temperature has mortality and morbidity projections and are an immediate concern because of social justice/social equity. This may be better for gaining political traction and resonance in terms of solutions.” – E Bermingham, Frost Science

“Most basic message we need to convey to residents: Ask your elected officials what they are doing on SLR.” – Anon

“I really like the visualization today. It helped me connect more to the issue and to the solutions.” – Ajani Stewart, City of Miami
We envisioned Miami-Dade in 2026... Common themes emerged:

- More blue and green spaces
- Canals and creative water management
- Fewer cars on the road, more public transportation
- Raised streets
- Evidence of renewable energy: solar panels, water

- Denser, more sensible urban living (like Europe) fewer people
- Acceptance of SLR realities and cooperation on solutions
- Tech-enabled communication between citizens and gov’t
- Communities coming together
- Accountability and regular reporting
Participants were asked to do a prioritization exercise with policy recommendations. Each person voted (4 votes) for the most important actions the city can take now. These rose to the top:

1. Protection for Our Water Supply (14 votes)
2. Support efforts to protect wetlands, mangroves, and other natural resources that provide protection against flooding and storm surges in developed areas (14 votes)
3. Urban Heat Islands as a public health issue: extreme heat, vector-borne illnesses...link it to climate change and actions people can take to reduce CO2, etc. (14 votes)
4. Use incentives and regulations, assure new development and/or redevelopment is focused in areas of higher elevation (11)
5. Encourage collaboration between county governments and private insurance companies to ensure insurance rates will remain fair (9)
6. Assure that SLR conditions are being incorporated into land development and building codes (9)
One Offer, One Ask