The session, supported by a USDN Peer Learning Exchange grant, convened twenty-three local government officials — from sustainability, planning, conservation, redevelopment, water, emergency management, energy, and climate and resilience offices. Peer Learning Exchange grants cover the cost of bringing together USDN members to deeply share policies and practices with other members ready to adopt them.

The idea for this peer exchange arose at the 2013 USDN Annual Meeting when staff from several cities were discussing post-Sandy recovery, adaptation to sea-level rise, and the cities’ interactions with FEMA’s evolving programs in flood insurance and flood-zone mapping. The five cities are tied together by similar age and history, many elements of regional infrastructure (e.g., transportation, power), and common risks and experience, most forcefully and recently emphasized by Superstorm Sandy.

The meeting participants dove deeply into several topics:

- Their experiences and lessons from Sandy and other recent significant natural events.
- Two aspects of electric power resiliency: resiliency at a regional (ISO) scale and resiliency at a local scale (e.g., microgrids, distributed generation).
- Details of FEMA’s process for releasing draft and final updated flood maps and the methodologies for producing the maps themselves.
- The effect of (generally) larger flood zones, increased numbers of residents and businesses required to obtain flood insurance, increases in flood-insurance rates mandated by the Biggert-Waters Act, and the Community Rating System (CRS).

Then the discussion shifted to a set of steps cities would take together to communicate their concerns about the above issues and explore additional issues:

1. Work together to produce a white paper on the flood map/zone issues, which the cities can use as the basis for communicating their concerns, particularly with the federal government.
2. Organize a conference call to discuss follow-up activities on regional energy resilience issues.
3. Consider organizing another meeting to discuss sustainability and resilience of the regional economy and regional transportation systems.