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### **Navigator Network Launches to Help 72 CDRZ Communities in the Southeast Build Climate and Disaster Resilience**

Ashland, OR – November 8, 2023

The Climate Ready America Southeast Navigator Network is set to assist 72 communities in four states that have recently received Community Disaster Resilience Zone (CDRZ) designations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This project will work with organizations in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to establish Navigators who will serve as trusted partners for CDRZ communities in their state. Navigators will work directly with CDRZ communities to help them take advantage of funding sources, identify capacity building opportunities, and secure technical support necessary to develop strategies that lead to tangible resilience benefits.

Those organizations include the Georgia Conservancy, the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency, the Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities at Furman University, and the Florida Climate Institute. Project IN-CORE and Resilient Cities Catalyst will offer direct technical support to communities across the four states.

This network will serve as a crucial resource for communities with CDRZ designations. Funded by the Walmart Foundation and led by the Geos Institute, this project aims to ensure that receiving a CDRZ designation positively transforms CDRZ communities across these four states. Learn more about the project: <https://geosinstitute.org/initiatives/climate-ready-america/southeast-navigator-network/>

*"The Geos Institute has a long history of helping communities develop equitable and ecologically sound climate resilience strategies. We are proud to lead this project and look forward to contributing our expertise to help at-risk communities thrive in the face of climate change."* - Tonya Graham, Executive Director, Geos Institute

*"The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency is looking forward to participating in this effort to bring streamlined support to particularly vulnerable communities in the state. We are especially thrilled to be part of a network with neighboring states in the southeast, which face similar challenges and opportunities for advancing resilience."* - Amanda Martin, Chief Resilience Officer, NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency

*"Our mission at the Georgia Conservancy is to support and build a Georgia where all people and the environment thrive. As a Navigator Organization we are honored to help serve the communities in Georgia with CDRZ designations. And we look forward to serving all of Georgia's communities that want to build climate resilience through the first Georgia Climate Innovation Center."* - Luben Raytchev, Community Design Lead, Georgia Conservancy

*"We are honored to be part of this effort and are thrilled to be able to increase the impact of the Shi Institute across South Carolina. Our team is excited to work with partners in the Lowcountry to empower communities and help them build resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters."* - Andrew Predmore, Executive Director, The Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities

*"We are excited to participate in this project as the Navigator Organization for Florida. With 32 CDRZ census tracts in a state that faces severe climate threats from sea level rise and coastal flooding to extreme heat, this effort will provide critical support to communities who need help accessing the available resources for advancing resilience work."* - Emily Powell, Co-Coordinator, Florida Climate Institute

*"We are thrilled to participate in the Southeast Navigator Network and to help empower communities in the Southeast to build resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters. This program represents a significant step forward in our country's commitment to create lasting positive impacts for the most at-risk communities."* - Andrew Salkin, Founding Principal - Resilient Cities Catalist

*"This project presents a great opportunity to directly support climate resilience in communities that need it the most, while simultaneously building the field of climate resilience by measuring*

*and evaluating its effectiveness."* - Lara Hansen Ph.D., Chief Scientist & Executive Director, EcoAdapt

*"Natural disasters disproportionately impact vulnerable communities who tend to face challenges recovering financially, including many of the communities Walmart serves. We look forward to how the Climate Ready America Southeast Navigator Network will drive progress for vital resilience projects that mitigate the impact of disasters in Community Disaster Resilience Zones and beyond. Our hope is that this initiative will help ensure that resources reach people who need them most."* - Brooks Nelson, Program Officer for Disaster Relief and Preparedness on the Walmart.org team

## **Geography**

Due to its vulnerability to natural hazards exacerbated by climate change, including severe storms, flooding, extreme heat, and drought, the project chose the Southeastern U.S. as the location for this demonstration. Many communities in this region also face high poverty rates and other social vulnerability indicators. This region accounts for 15% of the initial CDRZ designations from FEMA.

## **A Climate Ready America Demonstration Project**

In addition to supporting CDRZ communities, this initiative serves as the foundation for a broader structure that will help communities build resilience nationwide. [Climate Ready America](#), a nationwide system of support services, will integrate adaptation, mitigation, and equity to help communities build short- and long-term climate and disaster resilience. This civic infrastructure system will work in conjunction with federal agencies and other organizations, ensuring resilience programs reach communities where they are needed most, and community needs are communicated to those who build and develop support programs. In addition to lifting the Navigator Network, this project will support planning for the Georgia Climate Innovation Center – the first such Center to be developed in the U.S. as part of the Climate Ready America system.

## **Community Disaster Resilience Zones**

In December 2022 Congress passed the Community Disaster Resilience Zone Act, garnering strong bipartisan support. This legislation directs FEMA to identify the nation's most at-risk census tracts based on natural hazard risk and social vulnerability. FEMA named the first round of 483 designations on September 6, 2023. For more information visit:

<https://www.fema.gov/partnerships/community-disaster-resilience-zones>

## **About the Project Partners**

The Geos Institute has been a leader in supporting socially equitable and ecologically sound climate resilience across the U.S. since 2008. They have pioneered various resilience planning

frameworks and programs and continue to contribute to best practices in community-driven resilience efforts. For more information visit [www.geosinstitute.org](http://www.geosinstitute.org)

Founded in 1967, Georgia Conservancy is committed to the development and promotion of policies and practices that lessen the adverse impacts on Georgia's environment and its communities. They are working to ensure Georgia's communities are more resilient to ecological, demographic, and economic stresses. For more information visit <https://www.georgiaconservancy.org>

The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency works to ensure that North Carolina builds back smarter and stronger from natural disasters. The state agency works across federal, state and local borders to move federal and state disaster funding to those who need it most. The office is also focused on partnering with communities to build climate resiliency to better withstand future storms. NCORR programs include homeowner recovery, affordable housing, local infrastructure, mitigation and strategic buyout and long-term resiliency training and planning. For more information on NCORR's resilience program visit <https://www.rebuild.nc.gov/resiliency>

Launched in 2020, the Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities works on systems change at the intersection of socio-economic and ecological systems to tackle our most pressing sustainability challenges. The Institute places students and faculty at the heart of the work, making positive impacts through applied research, hands-on learning, and sustainability leadership training. The Institute builds on over a decade of proven success and national renown of the David E. Shi Center for Sustainability to envision a world that meets the needs of all people within the means of the living planet. For more information visit: <https://www.furman.edu/shi-institute/>

The Florida Climate Institute is a multi-disciplinary network of national and international research and public organizations, scientists, and individuals concerned with achieving a better understanding of climate variability and change. The Institute has eleven member universities. For more information visit: <https://floridaclimateinstitute.org/>

Project IN-CORE enables communities, consultants, and researchers to set up complex interdependent models of an entire community (its people, households, businesses, social institutions, buildings, transportation networks, water networks, and electric power networks) to predict their performance and recovery to natural hazard events, including the range of predicted outcomes. For more information visit: [www.in-core.org](http://www.in-core.org)

Resilient Cities Catalyst (RCC) is an independent nonprofit organization formed by members of the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) leadership team. RCC helps cities and communities create catalytic change to solve their most pressing challenges. For more information visit: <https://www.rcc.city/>

EcoAdapt surfs the crest of the adaptation wave to guide partners as they reshape planning and management in response to rapid climate change. EcoAdapt conducts original research, co-creates resources and tools, provides expert support, and offers training, all to build adaptation capacity. For more information visit: <https://www.EcoAdapt.org/>

Walmart.org represents the philanthropic efforts of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation. By focusing where the business has unique strengths, Walmart.org works to tackle key social and environmental issues and collaborate with others to spark long-lasting systemic change.

Walmart has stores in 20 countries, employs more than 2 million associates and does business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people. Walmart.org is helping people live better by supporting programs to accelerate upward job mobility for frontline workers, advance equity, address hunger, build inclusive economic opportunity for people in supply chains, protect and restore nature, reduce waste and emissions and build strong communities where Walmart operates. To learn more, visit [www.walmart.org](http://www.walmart.org) or connect on Twitter @Walmartorg.

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