

2. A ring to protect New York's shoreline



Photo illustration of proposed River Ring project in New York. Credit: Bjarke Ingels Group and James Corner Field Operations

A proposed project to redevelop part of New York's East River shoreline demonstrates a different way to protect cities against the threat of sea-level rise.

Why it matters: The devastation caused by 2012's Superstorm Sandy demonstrated the vulnerability of coastal cities to storm surges. "Soft edge" development could provide more robust protection while providing needed access to the waterfront.

How it works: The River Ring project — designed by the Bjarke Ingels Group and James Corner Field Operations on a site owned by Two Trees Management — would create a 6-acre waterfront park in northern Brooklyn, along the edges of the East River.

- Half of the development would be parkland in a fast-growing neighborhood that features little green space, while the rest would feature protected in-river access, including a series of beams and breakwater that would protect the community in the case of a storm surge.
- In the event of a storm, the tidal basin created by the project — capable of holding up to 4 million gallons of open water — would be permitted to flood, mitigating any damage.

What they're saying: "Most developments look at the waterfront, especially after Sandy, as trying to create a bulkhead," says Lisa Switkin, senior principal at James

Corner Field Operations. "But we're trying to create a new model for softer urban shorelines."

By the numbers: New York City is considering a number of different options to protect itself against the threat of sea-level rise and storms, [including a \\$119 billion seawall](#).

- But critics argue such hard barriers risk creating negative ecological side effects, and may well be insufficient to account for sea-level rise by the time they're completed.

The bottom line: Nearly a third of the U.S. population [lives in a coastal county](#), up 15.3% from 2000, and with sea levels set to continue to rise, we'll need to figure out a way to live with water, not against it.