Rebuilding with Resilience: Puerto Rico
Community Engagement Stories

The Storm That Changed It All
In September 2017, the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico, Virgin Island, and Dominica experienced their worst natural disaster in recorded history: Hurricane Maria. A Category 5 storm, and the third-costliest tropical cyclone on record, Maria’s maximum sustained winds of 175 mph (281 km/h) resulted in an estimated 3,059 fatalities and more than $91.61 billion in damage to housing and infrastructure. Of the three islands, Puerto Rico suffered the most devastation: some experts suggest as many as 4,600 people died on that island alone. With a slow federal recovery response and the looming threat of ever-more violent storms, today, Puerto Rico’s 3.4 million residents are suffering a humanitarian crisis.

United Puerto Ricans Stand
The Puerto Rican diaspora—an important part of the island’s culture and heritage—has always been intimately connected to its native land and highly active within Puerto Rican communities around the world. Today, the diaspora is playing a critical role in Hurricane Maria relief efforts—fundraising, flying in first aid and food, rebuilding roofs, providing pro bono professional services, and educating and advocating for those in need. Additionally, federal and local government alongside partnerships with nonprofits, the private sector, academic institutions, and individuals have spurred a $9.8 billion Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Funds will likely be distributed this year.

Resilience and Heroism
This exhibition showcases a collection of stories about community resilience and heroism in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. It is our hope that the stories inspire others to take action to create a more resilient Puerto Rico—and a more resilient world—for generations to come. Exemplary recovery efforts and methodologies are presented in detail so they can be replicated.

Many thanks to the contributing organizations:

And participating organizations:
This exhibition brings together bodies of work from three nonprofits:

ResilientSEE: We are a global alliance of designers, engineers, academics, nonprofits, and citizens striving to raise awareness, share knowledge, and create lasting, positive change in Puerto Rico. By approaching resilience through social, environmental and economic lenses, we believe communities can be better prepared to manage and recover from cascading consequences of an extreme weather event.

The Puerto Rican Agenda: The Puerto Rican Agenda comprises Puerto Rican leaders that seek to influence policy for the advancement of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago and beyond. Over the past two decades, the Agenda continues to develop and execute a community-driven vision for the Puerto Rican community in the diaspora and Puerto Rico.

Resilient Power Puerto Rico: Resilient Power Puerto Rico was launched immediately after Hurricane Maria by a group of friends from New York City with close ties to Puerto Rico. Its intention is to help historically underserved communities gain access to renewable energy, strengthen their critical built and social infrastructure systems, and build a sustainable and equitable future for all.