

Commuting in the age of sea rise. Miami Beach app could tell you how to avoid flooding

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Coastal flooding is the most visible symptom of climate change in South Florida. Outside of hurricanes, its more annoyance than instrument of property damage—at least for now—but it can make getting around the "ground zero" of global warming a pain.

Navigating the streets of Miami Beach during King Tide season without drenching a car's undercarriage in salt water is perhaps the biggest challenge.

The city's solution? We've got an app for that.

Miami Beach and Miami are developing high-tech tools to help residents understand and deal with rising seas as part of the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge. Winners will have their ideas fully funded, to the tune of \$1 million or \$5 million.

On the Beach, staffers envision an app that would warn residents when their homes, their offices or their routes to and from face flooding. Users could have the app keep an eye on any address they want and send notifications either days in advance or 30 minutes before.

When the resident's phone beeps, buzzes or rings with the notification, they'd see a window of time when flooding is possible. If a specific address is vulnerable, the app would suggest it's time to put flood

barriers in place (like sandbags or flood panels) or move cars to any of the nearby public parking lots at higher elevation.

If it's a route at risk, the app would show drivers an alternate path via the popular traffic avoidance app Waze or encourage them to stay put if the flooding is too widespread.

City staffers showed off a rough draft of the idea at a restaurant in Shorecrest Monday night, the start of a citywide tour that asks residents from both cities to help refine the ideas before final applications are due in August. Winners will be announced in October.

One resident, who works on more than a dozen construction sites, told staffers that if he knew when floods were coming he could move his heavy machinery out of harms way beforehand.

Miami's approach is aimed at property owners, not commuters. The city's tool would show residents the story of how [climate change](#) affects their city and their home—both with a broader look at the region and with personalized predictions based on the user's address.

Staffers are trying to decide when (or if) to show visualizations like a depiction of a resident's home under feet of water. The goal is to keep people interested, not to freak them out.

"If we do that—is that too scary and you want to leave town or is it 'I'm hyped up and I want to learn more about protecting myself'?" asked Mike Sarasti, Miami's director of innovation and technology.

The tool would nudge residents toward steps to protect their home from future risk by offering more information on options like home elevation and installing flood barriers.

"This is about changing behavior and informing decision making," said Ajani Stewart, Miami's resilience programs manager.

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