

IX. Implementation of All-Hazard Mitigation

Shortsighted development patterns, along with a misunderstanding of how the natural environment functions to provide protection from natural hazards, can contribute to community vulnerability. Implementing hazard mitigation can help ensure that communities do not increase their vulnerability by continuing inappropriate land uses, and by encouraging the acquisition, relocation or retrofitting of existing vulnerable structures along with the protection of valuable natural resources.

Through experience, communities can develop strategies to face the significant challenges that accompany post-disaster redevelopment and learn to balance the driving need for rapid recovery with implementing long-term hazard mitigation. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the necessity to meet basic needs and resettle displaced populations often overshadows the more abstract, longer-term sustainability considerations. Once full-scale reconstruction is initiated, it is difficult to modify projects in progress to meet sustainability objectives. This occurrence highlights the need for pre-disaster mitigation planning that incorporates principles of sustainable development within the context of reconstruction. If a disaster should strike, this plan will guide communities to rebuild stronger than before, incorporating the principles of hazard mitigation.

This plan is intended to encourage cooperation between intra-county agencies as well as cooperation between county agencies and those of neighboring jurisdictions. County and local jurisdictions will have the opportunity to implement recommended action items through existing programs and procedures that are deemed appropriate. The St. Clair County Homeland Security Emergency Management serves to maintain coordination among law enforcement, communications and warning systems, fire and rescue, public works, damage assessment, health and medical agencies, reception and care, and emergency management agencies.

In order to lay a framework for mitigation project prioritization, it is important to clearly understand the existing planning objectives of each community in relation to hazard mitigation. As such, the Metropolitan Planning Commission thoroughly reviewed the Master Plan for all communities within the county to discern any goals and objectives or capital improvement projects that were directly tied into planning for safety or mitigating the impacts of the hazards identified in this plan.

There were several consistencies for projects from the local government in St. Clair County:

- Emergency notification sirens in populated areas. This mitigation strategy will focus on rural areas with higher population concentrations.
- Evacuation, training, and response activities to respond to technological event, specifically hazardous materials incidents. Facility risk assessments are needed for hazardous materials facilities.
- Retrofitting or purchase of properties that have had multiple flood insurance claims.
- Stabilizing riverbanks and preventing erosion with environmentally sensitive techniques and native plantings.
- Public Awareness campaigns are applicable to multiple hazard priorities.

Integrating All-Hazard Planning into Policy and Regulatory Framework

The public and community input that the Hazard Mitigation Plan process solicited showed that St. Clair County is serious about planning for the safety, security, and vitality of its people. St. Clair County can be strengthened through a variety of mechanisms implemented by the stakeholders in the community. An approved hazard mitigation plan is a key first step in making our community more resistant to disaster, but it is only a component in incorporating mitigation into the overarching vision.

Existing components of the policy and regulatory framework include:

- Comprehensive Plans
- Functional Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Zoning Ordinances
- Subdivision Ordinances
- Building Codes
- Landscape and Maintenance Codes
- Existing Outreach Opportunities

Adoption of the Hazard Mitigation Plan

The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners (BOC) will be responsible for adopting the All Hazard Mitigation Plan. This governing body has the authority to promote sound public policy regarding potential hazards. Once the plan has been adopted, the Office of Emergency Management will be responsible for submitting it to the State Hazard Mitigation Officer at the Michigan State Police. The Michigan State Police will then submit the plan to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for review. This review will address the federal criteria outlined in FEMA Interim Final Rule 44 CFR Part 201. Upon acceptance by FEMA, St. Clair County and its local communities will gain eligibility for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds. Each unit of local government must adopt a resolution of support in order to be individually eligible.

Continued Public Involvement

Public participation is an integral component of the mitigation planning process and will continue to be essential as this hazard mitigation plan evolves and is updated over time.

The most appropriate and meaningful opportunities for the general public to be involved in the maintenance and implementation of the St. Clair County hazard mitigation plan is during the five-year plan review.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The plan will be reviewed every five years to determine whether there have been any significant changes within the county or surrounding area that may, in turn, necessitate changes in the types of mitigation actions proposed. New development in the identified hazard areas, an increased exposure to hazards, the increase or decrease in capability to address hazards, and changes to federal or state legislation are examples of factors that may affect the necessary content of the hazard mitigation plan.

The plan review provides community officials with an opportunity to evaluate those actions that have been successful and to explore the possibility of documenting potential losses avoided due to the implementation of specific mitigation measures. The review of the hazard mitigation plan provides the opportunity to address mitigation actions that may not have been successfully implemented as assigned. The St. Clair County Office of Emergency Management will be responsible for reconvening and evaluating the hazard mitigation plan for the five-year review.

Following a disaster declaration, the hazard mitigation plan will be revised as necessary to reflect lessons learned, or to address specific issues and circumstances arising from the event.

The Homeland Security Emergency Management Advisory Committee will review the plan annually and within 30 days of an event that elicits a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Additionally, materials will be disseminated as needs and issues arise. The plan will be fully updated and submitted for approval every 5 years.

The information on hazard, risk, vulnerability, and mitigation contained in this plan is based on the best information available at the time this plan was prepared. The St. Clair County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the comprehensive plans of the planning partners are considered to be integral parts of this plan. The County and partner municipalities, through adoption of comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, have planned for the impact of natural hazards. The plan development process provided the County and the municipalities with the opportunity to review and expand on policies contained within these planning mechanisms. The planning partners used their comprehensive plans and the hazard mitigation plan as complementary documents that work together to achieve the goal of reducing risk exposure to the citizens AREA-WIDE MITIGATION ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION of the planning area. An update to a comprehensive plan may trigger an update to the hazard mitigation plan.

Plan Update

It will *not* be the intent of the update process to develop a new hazard mitigation plan for St. Clair County. There will be a five-year review process implemented to reassess and modify the existing hazard mitigation plan. Based on needs identified by the planning team, this update will, at a minimum, include the elements below:

- The hazard risk assessment will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated using best available information and technologies.
- The action plans will be reviewed and revised to account for any initiatives completed, dropped, or changed and to account for changes in the risk assessment or new partnership policies identified under other planning mechanisms, as appropriate (such as the general plan).
- The public will be given an opportunity to comment on the update prior to adoption.
- Planning partnership governing bodies will adopt their portions of the updated plan.

During the five-year review process, the following questions will be considered as criteria for assessing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the hazard mitigation plan:

- Do the goals address current and expected conditions?
- Has the nature and/or magnitude of risks changed?
- Are the current resources appropriate for implementing the hazard mitigation plan?
- Are there implementation problems, such as technical, political, legal, or coordination issues with other agencies?
- Have the outcomes occurred as expected?
- Did the anticipated jurisdictions, agencies, and other partners participate in the plan implementation process as proposed?