
VII. Hazard Mitigation Goals and Objectives

This Hazard Mitigation Plan is specifically written to satisfy the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. By adopting the plan, St. Clair County will remain eligible for various federally funded hazard mitigation grant opportunities for five years.

Mitigation Defined

According to FEMA's "Report on Costs and Benefits of Natural Hazard Mitigation," hazard mitigation is defined as "sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects." The goal of mitigation is to reduce or eliminate loss of lives and property. In the past, mitigation has been predominantly focused solely on natural hazards. However, the concept of mitigation has been expanded to be effective in reducing the risks associated with technological and societal hazards. Mitigation does not encompass other emergency management functions such as preparedness, response, or recovery. Preparedness entails improving capabilities prior to a disaster occurring. Response is a disaster-onset activity to instantaneously save lives and safeguard property. Recovery is a post-disaster activity to return the community, or a portion of the community, to a normal status.

Mitigation encompasses any activities that prevent an emergency, diminish the chance of an emergency from occurring, or lessen the impacts of unavoidable emergencies. Efforts by Federal, state, and local governments can limit development in vulnerable areas, direct new development to less vulnerable areas, and endorse mechanisms to protect existing development in hazard-prone areas. Individuals also can contribute through practicing sound personal safety and being aware of potential hazard risks.

St. Clair County can directly benefit from hazard mitigation planning, which is the best tool a community has to reduce death, injury, and property losses; to identify specific problems and appropriate solutions; to achieve multiple objectives in a sustainable and efficient manner; to reduce future risks and prioritize post-disaster planning efforts; to capitalize on Federal, state, and local funding opportunities; and to promote public awareness and participation.

There are six classifications of hazard mitigation strategies that can minimize loss of life and protect public health and safety during hazard events. They are prevention, property protection, natural resource protection, emergency services, structural projects, and public education.

-
-
- **Prevention mechanisms** include regulatory methods such as planning and zoning, building regulations, open space planning, land development regulations, and stormwater management.
 - **Property protection** actions diminish the risk of structural damage through acquisition of land, relocation of buildings, modifying high-risk structures, and floodproofing high-risk structures.
 - **Natural resource protection** can soften hazard impacts through mechanisms such as erosion and sediment control or wetlands protection.
 - **Emergency services** measures include warning, response capacity, critical infrastructures protection, and health and safety maintenance.
 - **Structural mitigation** controls natural hazards through projects such as reservoirs, levees, diversions, channel modifications and storm sewers.
 - **Public education** includes providing hazard maps and information, outreach programs, real estate disclosure, technical assistance and education to all members of the community.

County Mitigation Goals and Objectives

When the county embarks on any large-scale community planning effort, it is imperative that the planning process is driven by a clear set of goals and objectives. Goals and objectives are the foundation of an effective hazard mitigation plan. They address the key problems and opportunities of a community and help to establish a framework for identifying risks and developing strategies to mitigate those risks. St. Clair County's hazard mitigation goals were derived from planning discussions of the Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee, meetings with local officials, public input obtained during four Hazard Mitigation Plan open houses held in various parts of the county, input from numerous county departments, and the St. Clair County Master Plan.

In order to fully understand the hazard mitigation goals, objectives, and actions it is necessary to clearly define the terms “**goal**,” “**objective**,” and “**action**.”

- A **goal** is a broad-based statement of intent that establishes the direction for the St. Clair County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Goals can essentially be thought of as the desired “outcomes” of successful implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

-
-
- An **objective** is the stated “means” of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be executed in the process of achieving goals.
 - An **action** is a project-specific strategy to mitigate a particular hazard event within the context of the overarching goals and objectives.

While specific mitigation actions for each individual hazard are listed in Chapter 7, it is important to note that the actions for each individual hazard were selected and evaluated in relation to the overarching hazard mitigation goals and objectives of this plan, which are as follows:

Goal #1: Reduce the possibility of damage and losses to existing assets, including people, critical infrastructures, and public facilities.

Objectives:

- Reduce injuries and loss of life from hazards.
- Increase and maintain appropriate emergency equipment.
- Improve warning systems to adequately warn the public in high-risk areas.
- Improve communication systems to better respond to disasters.
- Increase knowledge of safety measures among employers and the general public.
- Protect residential structures, large employment centers, and commercial facilities.
- Better serve sensitive populations, such as the elderly and disabled and those persons with a limited ability to speak or understand the English language.

Goal #2: Ensure uninterrupted government and emergency functions in a disaster.

Objectives:

- Strengthen and maintain critical structures and infrastructures.
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional cooperation among emergency agencies.
- Improve public and private organizational response capabilities.
- Stimulate governmental entities to recognize and mitigate all potential hazards.
- Promote partnerships between the state, counties, and local to identify, prioritize, and implement mitigation actions.

-
-
- Improve public and private organizational preparedness.
 - Incorporate mitigation goals, objectives, and measures into existing and future plans, regulations, programs and projects.
 - Identify infrastructure, land use, and population vulnerabilities through both the public and private sector.

Goal #3: Ensure continuity of private sector functions in a hazard event.

Objectives:

- Improve public and private organizational response capabilities.
- Promote hazard mitigation in the business community and encourage employers to develop and implement mitigation measures.
- Develop public-private partnerships to implement mitigation activities.
- Increase knowledge of safety measures among employers and employees within St. Clair County.
- Work with business community to address infrastructure vulnerabilities and security deficiencies.

Goal #4: Increase public understanding and support for effective hazard mitigation.

Objectives:

- Educate the public to increase awareness of all hazards and opportunities for mitigation actions.
- Encourage people to assume some responsibility for their own protection.
- Involve local municipalities and general public in hazard mitigation planning.
- Inform and remind citizens, of all ages and walks of life, concerning the hazards they may face and suggest steps they can take to both protect themselves and their property.
- Develop partnerships and educational programs with schools and colleges within St. Clair County.
- Monitor and publicize the effectiveness of mitigation actions implemented countywide.

Goal #5: Build and support local capacity and commitment to become less vulnerable to hazards.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness and knowledge of hazard mitigation principles and practice among local officials.

-
-
- Utilize GIS mapping to illustrate potential hazardous areas.
 - Develop hazard mitigation plan and provide technical assistance to implement plan.
 - Review and update hazard mitigation plan every five years.

Goal #6: Manage growth in St. Clair County through sustainable principles and practices to limit hazard areas.

Objectives:

- Encourage and facilitate the continuous review and updating of master plans and zoning ordinances to limit development in hazard areas.
- Encourage consistent enforcement of master plans, zoning ordinances, and building codes.
- Promote disaster resistant future development.
- Reduce and prevent degradation of natural resources.
- Protect floodplains, wetlands and other important natural areas.
- Institute or strengthen regulations to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Encourage and facilitate the adoption of building codes and construction requirements that protect renovated existing assets and new development in hazard areas.
- Encourage local communities to employ the principles of smart growth.
- Resolve any existing environmental conflicts and take steps to prevent future conflicts.
- Encourage open space in new developments.
- Limit building in high-risk areas.
- Improve building design and construction.
- Maintain and protect essential public services, critical facilities and public infrastructure.

Goal #7: Explore funding options for priority mitigation activities.

Objectives:

- Leverage grant money by utilizing county/municipal funds to implement mitigation activities.
- Develop public-private partnerships to implement mitigation activities.
- Create and implement a prioritization process that includes monetary, environmental, and sociological considerations.
- Use a cost-benefit analysis of mitigation strategies to evaluate

impact and feasibility.

- Develop and maintain an effective capital improvements program.