

1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

To develop a natural hazard mitigation plan that reflects Hardin County's natural and human-caused hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities, the Hardin County EMA utilized a comprehensive, whole community planning process that involved jurisdictions and stakeholders from across the county. This section describes the process utilized to develop the plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were included throughout the plan development process.

1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The 2023 update of the mitigation plan was anticipated to be a six to eight month process from the onset of the project. This timeframe was necessary to receive and administer the grant, contract with a service provider, research hazards and risks, develop mitigation strategies and actions, include jurisdictions and stakeholders in the planning process, and complete the state and federal plan review process prior to adoption. These efforts also included development of an action plan to capture and analyze new information required by modified mitigation plan guidance which would be in effect when the plan was reviewed and approved. Each phase of plan development included specific activities and steps, as described below.

1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning Process

Hardin County's most recent mitigation plan was adopted by Hardin County Commissioners on March 20, 2018 and approved by FEMA on March 26, 2018. The plan's federal approval expires on March 25, 2023. The plan is posted in the State of Ohio Emergency Management Agency mitigation portal, and is open for public access. To support development of an updated mitigation plan, Hardin County EMA submitted a plan development project grant application for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding through the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, and was awarded a grant for \$17,500.00 on June 22, 2022. The application identified the jurisdictions in Hardin County that would participate in the planning process. Discussions with jurisdiction officials ensued, garnering their willingness to participate in the update of the county's mitigation plan.

Upon award of the grant, Hardin County EMA completed the approved procurement process to identify a Contractor to manage the plan update process. Hardin County entered into discussion with Resource Solutions Associates, LLC to coordinate the project, work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to collect information, and develop the new plan. A contract was signed on August 22, 2022.

The Hardin County EMA Director met with Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch staff to review the requirements for grant administration, plan development, and plan approval. The EMA Director and Contractor met on September 28, 2022 to develop a project timeline and to establish stakeholder contact list parameters. The whole community planning portion of the project began with multiple group meetings on November 16 and 17, 2022. Seven meetings, all open to the public, were held over those two days to discuss various topics, as required by

hazard mitigation guidance. The updated HIRA section was released to the planning meeting participants and other key stakeholders on February 14, 2022 for their review and feedback; the current plan strategies were sent to all communities on February 13 for their assessment and status reporting. All documents were returned with feedback by February 28, 2023. The draft strategy section of the updated plan was released to the meeting participants and other key stakeholders on March 6, 2023 for feedback no later than the public meeting scheduled for the following week. The final mitigation planning committee meeting was held on March 16, 2023. One opportunity to meet was provided in the afternoon, and another in the evening. A public review period for the plan was held from March 17-31, 2022. The plan was posted on the Contractor's website with open access, and the link was provided for Hardin County EMA and all Hardin County municipalities to post. A news release was published to provide information on how to access the draft plan and provide feedback. The project culminated with a completed plan submitted to Ohio EMA and FEMA for review on April 3, 2023. This timeline allowed Hardin County to have an approved plan in place by the spring of 2023.

1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings

Upon completion of all necessary grant agreements, contracts, and administrative requirements to get the mitigation project started, the Contractor coordinated with the EMA Director to develop an initial list of planning team members that included name, title, address, electronic mail address, and phone numbers. The planning committee from 2016 was used as a starting list, and changes and additions were made as appropriate. Persons representing social and community resilience groups and services were added to comply with the new plan guidance. The final list was cross-checked using new FEMA guidance for local mitigation planning. This list included representatives from all jurisdictions and a broad range of community organizations and agencies. City and village elected and appointed officials as well as the township trustees and fiscal officers were identified. School districts, post-secondary educators, public health and healthcare professionals, and development specialists were included on the participant list. Firefighters, chiefs, police officers, and EMS were asked to represent their respective agencies in the meetings. Because Hardin County is so agriculturally dominated, the various federal and local agricultural officials and conservation professionals were invited to participate in the plan development. Individual businesses, farmers, and other key local industrial representatives were identified and included. Watershed group representatives, adjacent county EMA directors, and county nonprofit organizations were invited. Special attention was given to agencies that provide social support, such as Hardin County Job and Family Services, advocacy groups, and special services such as Services for the Aging and Hardin County services for elderly, children, and disadvantaged populations. The complete list of participating stakeholders is included as table 1-3 later in this section. This whole community-based Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was actively engaged throughout the planning process by providing information and data, attending meetings, and reviewing draft sections of the plan. This process was conducted with four distinct purposes: project introduction to the stakeholders, hazard identification and risk assessment, mitigation strategy development, and plan review. While it is documented that over seventy key community leaders participated in the process, there are many more county residents and workers who provided undocumented input throughout the process as part of their job or volunteer duty.

Mitigation Plan Mid-Term Review Meetings

Hardin County conducted two mid-term reviews of the March 2018 mitigation plan; the first was held on January 30, 2020, and the second on September 27, 2021. This in-person review of hazards, vulnerabilities, and strategy progress was supported by attendance from various stakeholders and communities. In January 2020, Alger, Forest, Kenton and Kenton representatives attended, as well as Hardin County officials, and Buck, Dudley, Goshen and Taylor Creek Townships. The second review was attended by Hardin County officials, township representatives and residents from Blanchard, Buck, Cessna, Hale, Liberty, Roundhead and Washington Township, and community organizations. Due to the pandemic, the second mid-term review included digital options for attendance as well as in-person options. Due to the digital option for participation, several surveys were distributed and returned as a portion of the participation for this review. Again, this review addressed hazards, risk assessment, vulnerabilities, and the current status of strategies and mitigation efforts.

Key findings of the 2020 mid-term review include the following points:

- Hazards should include infrastructure failure such as dam failure, sanitary and storm sewer system overload, utility failure, highway and road degradation as well as bridge and culvert failure, and water and sewer treatment systems including water contamination.
- Flooding actually includes not only riverine flooding, but also flash, karst, and sewer backup flooding; this widened definition of flooding is taken in the context of climate change and increased precipitation amounts and intensities.
- Land subsidence includes waterway bank impingement and deterioration and problems caused by rapid high-volume runoff, partially due to potential climate change.
- Earthquake probably seems to be increasing slightly.
- Water quality is of greater concern as raw water supplies are endangered by contamination of an outside source, and as environmental protection measures fail to protect the aquifers and water collection points through phosphorus and nitrogen runoff and/or hazardous materials spills and leaks.
- Of extreme note was the 2019 farm season where 91,000 local acres of cropland were not planted due to flooding and heavy precipitation. Discussion included effects of climate change as well as changes in agricultural practices.
- The Village of Forest reported on phases one and two of a storm sewer project to improve drainage and stated that Patterson might be able to be included. They are also aggressively removing tree and vegetation debris from ditches.

The 2021 Review resulted in the following findings:

- Grant programs, including HMGP, PDM and BRIC were reviewed and described.
- Participants felt that storms have included stronger wind gusts, and are more frequent. They felt that ambient wind speed is higher, and that more storms include severe wind. They are seeing more weather fronts clash with each other over Hardin County, increasing the risk of damages. Rainfall is heavier, and lightning seems more severe and more frequently part of thunderstorm activity. There seem to be more rotational winds.

Temperatures vary abruptly, and a 20-degree high variation day-to-day is common. Rainfall can easily total 1 inch in a couple hours, and 2-4 inches over a couple days. Runoff is more dramatic, and causes gullies and degraded ditch banks to form.

- Recent damages include wind/storm damage to hangers at the Hardin County Airport, wind damage to a transformer substation at Durez Corporation; several farm outbuildings and homes damaged by winds and possible tornadic activity; and
- 2019 crop losses were excessive due to heavy rain, standing water, and inability to plant crops.
- Hazardous materials exposure has increased dramatically, especially in downtown Kenton. A traffic loads have doubled, and this adds to congestion and crash vulnerability. Trucks are using rural roads to avoid downtown, and are therefore on roads not built to support the weight of semi-trucks, causing accelerated road degradation and damage. Increases in load capacity, speed, and unsecured loads are also worse.
- Rail traffic is escalating in number and speed, and trains are far longer than in the past.
- Increased social needs, for example, sheltering and post-incident need for support systems, is observed and the health and public health departments are working to increase capacity and capabilities.
- Home heating problems have been observed. Dependency on energy suppliers is therefore much more critical.
- There is concern about capability and redundancy of two-way communication systems.
- There is concern over the adequacy of public safety services to meet community needs due to staffing and other logistical shortfalls, in the 2024 Eclipse.
- McGuffey has a new outdoor warning siren; Township Road 115 has been improved; County Road 180 has had ditch and tile work completed; signage overall has improved. A road in Hog Creek Marsh was elevated.
- Conservation efforts to protect natural resources have increased; tree and debris management is ongoing. Ditch maintenance is accelerated.
- Nuisance properties are being demolished and removed, and brownfields are being cleaned up.
- “We Dig Kenton” is improving the infrastructure in the city. Kenton, Ridgeway and Forest are set to received \$1.75M for this kind of work. Kenton is improving its water treatment plant.
- A \$6.8M project near Dunkirk will address water quality monitoring.

In-person Meetings

The initial planning meetings to specifically address updating the current mitigation plan were held November 16 and 17, 2022. Four meetings were held at the Hardin County Fairgrounds on November 16, 2022. These meetings addressed hazard identification, risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, resiliency, and response capabilities. These meetings were attended by a variety of countywide jurisdiction representatives, elected and appointed officials, agency representatives, and county residents.

This set of meetings served to update information about actual storms and other incidents since the last plan was written, realizing that some of these incidents were described in the annual reviews, as noted previously. Also discussed were community lifelines and the county's ability to meet those needs during a serious incident. Special circumstances like economic failure, historical preservation, and loss prevention were included. Participants discussed, as they did in annual reviews, the potential effects of climate change and how natural events seem to have changed in recent years. A significant discussion included special needs populations, obvious as well as not, and socially or economically disadvantaged persons. The participants agreed that there are many non-English speaking persons in Hardin County, and cited the need to serve all populations regardless of linguistics, characteristics, or individual needs. These issues are described in detail in the HIRA.

Additional meetings on November 17, 2022 were held at the Hardin County Sheriff's Office training room, and addressed strategy development. These meetings were also attended by a variety of county and municipal officials, various agency representatives, and others. Participants discussed a disaster resistant community, resilience and the need for planning tools to assist with implementation of good choices from a sustainability perspective. They considered resource gaps, shortages, and the need for protection of community assets. Those attending reviewed current and potential mitigation strategies, including structurally engineered projects, prevention, protection, natural resource protection, and community outreach categories of projects. These types are all included in the updated mitigation strategies in Section 03.b Mitigation Strategies.

The final in-person meeting was held on Wednesday, March 16th at the Hardin County Sheriff's Office training center. A variety of county and municipal officials, agency representatives, and others attended this final meeting. In addition to discussions on review of the draft plan and how to access it, the adoption process was explained for county and municipal officials. The potential grant funds that might include mitigation efforts were discussed, and the inclusion of mitigation projects in jurisdictional capital and operating budgets was discussed. Hardin County was encouraged to continue its past mid-term plan reviews, as well as reviews after any incident that causes activation of emergency operations plans.

Hazard and Risk Identification Development Research

The hazard and risk identification phase included extensive research and information gathering. An objective query of incident listing, declared incident identification, and damage assessments was completed. The use of new tools to assess vulnerability from both property and social vulnerability perspectives was achieved through the use of several online tools, as described in detail in the HIRA. Information was then combined with the information from surveys, meeting input, and mid-term reviews to validate and adjust findings, if needed.

Mitigation Strategy Development

Extensive review of the plan strategies was completed in 2020 and 2021, and that review continued to include the time since October 2021. All the feedback from those three-time frames provided the basis for reviewed, revised, and additional strategies as included in that

section of this updated plan. All municipalities and Hardin County were asked to provide a written response, through a survey, regarding the status of all current strategies. They were asked in the meetings in November to add strategies that were not included currently. They were asked to eliminate any current strategies that were not effective or necessary.

The Contractor combined all information received in person, through surveys, and necessary through research into a draft strategy document. That document was released to the meeting participants and all county and municipal officials on March 6th. They were asked to provide feedback for changes to be made prior to the March 17th release of the plan for public review.

Final Plan Review

Following extensive input from the meetings, surveys, and digital communication, the Contractor assembled the input from start to finish into a final draft plan. The planning team, jurisdictions and stakeholders were provided with electronic access to the plan through the Contractor's website and were asked to provide feedback, corrections, or to ask questions. Planning team members and county residents were asked to submit their feedback through the form provided on the website or by email directly to the Contractor.

A printed copy of the draft plan was available at the Hardin County EMA for anyone who preferred to read a printed copy. The EMA Director and Contractor offered to assist with other reasonable accommodations as needed, to ensure that all county residents, workers, officials, and others had the opportunity to read the plan, ask questions, and provide feedback. Their comments would be received in any manner feasible or convenient to them.

A public review period was conducted in March. From March 17 through 31, 2023, the plan was available electronically on the Contractor's website and in print form at the EMA for any member of the public to review and provide comments.

The public was notified of the review period through news releases to local media outlets, letters to jurisdictions, posts on the Hardin County website, and by flyers and notices in county and village office buildings. All news releases and notices included a location where the plan could be viewed electronically or in print as well as contact information for the Contractor and EMA staff.

The EMA Director and Contractor reviewed all comments and questions received from stakeholders and the public; appropriate revisions were incorporated into the plan. After final revisions were complete, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch for state review. Upon state and federal approval, the formal adoption process began. This process is explained in section 4.0 Plan Adoption.

Table 1-1 includes a complete list of planning team meetings and work sessions conducted throughout the planning process.

Table 1-1: Planning Team Meetings and Survey/Review

Date	Location	Purpose/Audience
09/26/22	Hardin County EMA	Meeting with EMA Director and Contractor to develop timeline and project action plan
11/16/22	Hardin County Fairgrounds	Hazard Identification Open Meeting
11/16/22	Hardin County Fairgrounds	Vulnerability Assessment Open Meeting
11/16/22	Hardin County Fairgrounds	Resiliency Assessment Open Meeting
11/16/22	Hardin County Fairgrounds	Capability Assessment Open Meeting
11/17/22	Hardin County Sheriff's Office	Capability Assessment Open Meeting (repeat)
11/17/22	Hardin County Sheriff's Office	Mitigation Goal and Strategy Development Meeting
11/17/22	Hardin County Sheriff's Office	Continued Mitigation Goal and Strategy Development Meeting
02/13/23	Digital	Review of Current Strategies; questionnaire to determine status of each strategy distributed
02/21/23	Digital	Release of the HIRA draft to planning committee and key officials for pre-review through 03/06/23
03/16/23	Hardin County Sheriff's Office	Final Review Meeting; also included strategy funding and adoption discussions
03/16/23	Hardin County Sheriff's Office	Final Review Meeting – evening repeat session

1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

With nine incorporated jurisdictions and a population of approximately 30,696, many stakeholders in Hardin County were identified as having a role in the mitigation planning process. The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team included broad participation from these identified stakeholders. All municipalities and townships, as well as county workers and residents were invited to participate, and many took advantage of that opportunity. Special interest groups such as economic development, land use planners, public health, natural resources, agriculture, business and industry, education, and non-profit community organizations were invited to participate in this planning process.

From the beginning of the planning process, the EMA attempted to include a wide variety of representative of the whole community. A broad, inclusive list of planning team members was developed with the intention of including all agencies with an interest or role in emergency management, and thus in disaster mitigation. The EMA Director and other emergency management advocates talked about the plan and the process to many people across the county, encouraging participation and input. As the process unfolded and planning began, a whole community planning approach was used to achieve these goals throughout the fifteen months it took to develop the plan.

The initial invitation to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was extended to the following officials, leaders, and stakeholders from Hardin County and adjacent jurisdictions:

- Incorporated jurisdictions (county, city, and village officials)
- Township representatives (trustees, fiscal officers)

- Specialized disciplines, including fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, business and industry, agriculture, agri-businesses, education and academia, nonprofits, social agencies, and the general public
- Specific appointed officials, including the county floodplain manager, GIS mapping specialist, conservation specialists, regional planning, building officials, development officials, fire chiefs, police chiefs, public health commissioners, extension agents
- Economic development organizations such as economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, regional planning officials and tourism and visitors’ bureaus
- Elected officials such as the county auditor, treasurer, engineer, and commissioners
- Emergency management officials from the adjacent counties
- Non-profit agencies including American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Citizen Corps, and United Way as well as community action groups
- Special interest groups such as watershed coalitions, conservancy districts, federal partners, state agencies with facilities in the county, and others with a special interest in the well-being of Hardin County
- Residents, businesses, and the general public

1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation

All incorporated jurisdictions in Hardin County chose to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. Participating jurisdictions include [Hardin County](#), [Ada](#), [Alger](#), [Dunkirk](#), [Forest](#), [Kenton](#), [McGuffey](#), [Mt. Victory](#), [Patterson](#), and [Ridgeway](#).

Residents living outside of these incorporated jurisdictions are represented by the township level of government. Hardin County has fifteen townships: Blanchard, Buck, Cessna, Dudley, Goshen, Hale, Jackson, Liberty, Lynn, Marion, McDonald, Pleasant, Roundhead, Taylor Creek, and Washington. While the county will officially adopt the plan on behalf of these townships, trustees, fiscal officers, and other officials were invited to planning team meetings and encouraged to participate in the planning process.

The officials identified in table 1-2 served as contacts for each jurisdiction. They were asked to notify other officials and residents within their jurisdiction of meetings and work sessions, and invite any other residents or officials to participate in the planning meetings, as well as asked to attend themselves. Jurisdictions were also invited specifically to review current strategies from the plan, and provide a status update, and to review the draft plan and participate in the final plan review meetings prior to the plan’s submission to state reviewers. They would also, at that meeting, hear about grants and funding sources for projects. The Sheriff’s Office training room meeting location was chosen for its convenience for township and municipal officials and residents.

Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdictions and Representatives

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Ada	Dave Retterer	Mayor
Ada	Jamie Hall	Administrator, Community Improvement Corporation

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Ada	Michael Harnischfeger	Police Chief
Ada	Jay Epley	Fire Chief
Ada	Sean Beck	Council President; Hardin Co. United Way
Alger	James Hubert (Von) Summa	Mayor
Alger	Trevor Prichard	Alger Community Fire Assn.
Alger	P. Osborne	Maintenance, Street & Water Dept.
Dunkirk	Teresa Cramer	Mayor
Dunkirk	Phyllis Spencer	Fiscal Officer
Forest	Dean Hankins	Mayor
Forest	Sean Young	Village Administrator
Kenton	Cindy Murray	City Safety Service Director
Kenton	Lynn Webb	Mayor
Kenton	Bruce Donnelly	Fire Chief
Kenton	Dennis Musser	Police Chief
Kenton	Jacqueline Fitzgerald	Community Improvement Director
McGuffey	Mathew Motter	Mayor
Mt. Victory	Jerry Brose	Mayor
Patterson	Joseph Holtzberger	Mayor
Ridgeway	Kevin Howland	Mayor
Hardin County	Timothy Striker	County Commissioner
Hardin County	Fred Rush	County Commissioner
Hardin County	Roger Crowe	County Commissioner
Hardin County	Jacob Burgbacher	EMA Director
Hardin County	Mark Doll	Regional Planning Director
Hardin County	Michael Bacon	Auditor
Hardin County	Lucas Underwood	Engineer
Hardin County	Nathan Saylor	GIS Coordinator
Hardin County	Steve White	Information & Technology Director
Hardin County	Ryan Taylor	Tax Map Coordinator
Hardin County	Justin Dick	Kenton-Hardin Health Department/PHEP Coordinator
Hardin County	Keith Everhart	Hardin County Sheriff
Hardin County	Dennis Burns	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Hardin County	Scott Holbrook	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Hardin County	Emily Hart	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Hardin County	Randy Paul	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Hardin County	Denna Clem	Hardin County Soil & Water Conservation District Director
Hardin County	Jamie Hunsicker	Health Commissioner
Hardin County	Melissa Humble	Director of Nursing, Hardin Health
Hardin County	Tammy Colon	MHSRB Executive Director
Hardin County	Jodi Tudor	Job & Family Services Director

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Hardin County	Matthew Jennings	Hardin Co. Airport and Hardin County Civic Organizations (3)
Hardin County	Jordan Bailey	Job & Family Services Fiscal Dept.
Hardin County	Scott Ribley	Maintenance Supervisor; Roundhead Fire Department
Hardin County	Katey Henson	Prosecutor's Office
Blanchard Township	Katie Morgan	Fiscal Officer
Blanchard Township	Tom Jenkins	Zoning Inspector
Blanchard Township	Mike Crist	Trustee
Blanchard Township	Oliver Heldman	Trustee: Hardin Northern Schools
Blanchard Township	Rob Wilson	Trustee; Hardin Co. Ag Society
Buck Township	Roger Crowe	Fiscal Officer
Buck Township	Mike Kasler	Zoning Officer
Buck Township	Rodney Haudenschild	Trustee
Cessna Township	Wesley Potter	Fiscal Officer
Cessna Township	Mark Schwemer	Zoning Officer
Cessna Township	Chris Vermillion	Trustee
Dudley Township	Marcella Jennings	Fiscal Officer
Dudley Township	Mark Schwemer	Zoning Inspector
Dudley Township	Nathan Brooks	Trustee; Business Owner; Civic clubs
Dudley Township	William Legge	Trustee
Dudley Township	Michael Holland	Trustee
Goshen Township	Tammy Sherman	Fiscal Officer
Goshen Township	Bob Wood	Zoning Officer
Goshen Township	Allen Barrett	Trustee
Goshen Township	Daryl Flowers	Trustee
Hale Township	Gina Messner	Fiscal Officer
Hale Township	Ron Cronley	Trustee
Hale Township	Mike Kasler	Zoning Inspector
Hale Township	Scott Elliott	Trustee
Jackson Township	Christa Gillfillian	Fiscal Officer
Jackson Township	Ronald Loveridge	Zoning Inspector
Jackson Township	Nathan Deringer	Trustee
Jackson Township	Frank Sellars	Trustee
Jackson Township	Jerry Messenger	Trustee
Liberty Township	Patricia Griffin	Fiscal Officer
Liberty Township	Bradley Hays	Trustee
Liberty Township	Jeffrey Acheson	Trustee
Lynn Township	Doris Ralston	Fiscal Officer
Lynn Township	Steven Oglesbee	Trustee
Lynn Township	Scott Sprang	Trustee
Lynn Township	Richard Wilcox	Sexton
Marion Township	Brice Beaman	Fiscal Officer
Marion Township	Kenny Williams	Sexton
McDonald Township	Cindy Shepherd	Fiscal Officer
Pleasant Township	Courtney Doll	Fiscal Officer

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Pleasant Township	Mike Kasler	Zoning Inspector
Pleasant Township	Ron Rogers	Trustee
Pleasant Township	Wes Broseke	Trustee
Roundhead Township	M. Sally Newfer	Fiscal Officer
Taylor Creek Township	Shannon Allman	Fiscal Officer
Taylor Creek Township	Krane Stahler	Zoning Inspector
Taylor Creek Township	Jerold Elsasser	Trustee
Taylor Creek Township	Ronald Freshcorn	Trustee
Washington Township	Gail Rodabaugh	Fiscal Officer
Washington Township	Craig Stump	Trustee

1.2.2 Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

Because Hardin County's intention was to encourage broad participation in the planning process, an expansive initial invitation list was developed. Using information from multiple sources, including EMA contact lists, jurisdiction and agency websites, the Board of Elections, and general online information, a master planning team of approximately 100 invitees was developed. For each contact, this master list identified name, position, agency or jurisdiction, e-mail address, telephone number, and postal address. This list included representation from business and industry, community services, economic and community development, education, government, infrastructure and engineering, natural resources and agriculture, and public safety. Emergency management officials from adjacent counties were also included on the list. For Hardin County, this included county EMA officials in central and western Ohio. The complete list of invited and participating stakeholders is provided in table 1-3.

Table 1-3: Additional Invited Stakeholders

Agency/Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance	Mark Doll	Director
Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance	Holli Underwood	President
Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance	Morgan Ellis	Director of Chamber and Tourism
Central Ohio Trauma System; Hardin Co. LEPC	Arin Tracy	LEPC Chairman; COTS representative
Hardin County LEPC	Abraham Oates	Hardin County Veterans Services and LEPC Info Coord.
Ohio Health Hardin Memorial Hospital	Michelle Wright	Representative
Ohio Health Hardin Memorial Hospital	Joy Bischoff	President
Black Swamp Conservancy	Rick Cochran	Executive Director
Blanchard River Watershed Partnership	Lauren Sandhu	Watershed Coordinator
Indian Lake Watershed Project	Tom Langhals	President
Maumee River Basin Partnership of Local Governments	Jennifer English	MS4 Coordinator
OSU Extension in Hardin County	Mark Badertscher	Agriculture Agent; Farm Bureau Representative

OSU Extension in Hardin County	Mark Light	4H Leader and STEM teacher
Hardin County Agricultural Society	Grant Mizek	Director
Hardin County Agricultural Society	Craig Stump	Director
Ottawa River Coalition	Beth Seibert	Coordinator
Sandusky River Watershed Coalitions	Cindy Brooks	Watershed Specialist
Scioto River Valley Federation	Joseph Roden	President
Museum Board of Hardin County	Tim Striker	Board member
Ada EMS	Tom Miller	Chief
Ada Area Chamber of Commerce	Lindsay Walden Holler	Director
Ada Liberty Township Fire Department	Jay Epley	Chief
Alger Community Fire Association	Ethan Hunt	Chief
BKP Ambulance District	Chad Smith	Director
Dunkirk EMS	Ron Dysert	Chief
Forest Police Department	Donny Southward	Chief
Forest Volunteer Fire Department	Doug Hankins	Chief
Jackson Forest Ambulance Service	Dean Hankins	Chief of Operations
Marseilles Fire Department	Steve Dickinson	Chief
McGuffey Volunteer Fire Company	Jerry Ault	Chief
Mt. Victory Fire Department	Dennis Hinton	Chief
Mt. Victory EMS	Kathy Ansley	Chief
Mt. Victory EMS	Nathan Hampton	Representative
Northern Hardin County Fire District	Ron Dysert	Chief
Northern Hardin County Fire District	Oliver Heldman	Captain
Northern Hardin County Fire District	Kevin Ridgeway	Captain
American Red Cross	Audrey Hankins	Hardin Co. Representative
American Red Cross	Marc Cantrell	Disaster Program Manager
Ohio Northern University	Gregory Horne	Safety and Security Chief
Ohio Northern University	Michael Rush	ONU Healthwise
Richland EMS and BMRT Squad	Andrew Roy	Chief
Richland Fire Department	Jason Johns	Chief
Ridgeway Fire Department	Jim Newland	Chief
USV Alger EMS	Andrea Helton	Chief
Roundhead Volunteer Fire Department	Travis Spearman	Chief
SE Hardin/NW Union Joint Fire District	Dennis Hinton	Fire department
SE Hardin/NW Union Joint Fire District	Nathan Hampton	Chief
Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative	Mark Terrill	Representative
Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative	Tim Street	Representative
Allen County EMA	Thomas Berger	Director
Auglaize County EMA	Troy Anderson	Director
Hancock County EMA	Lee Swisher	Director
Logan County EMA	Helen Norris	Director
Marion County EMA	Sarah McNamee	Director
Union County EMA	Brad Glibert	Director
Wyandot County EMA	Dale Risley	Director
Ada Exempted Village Schools	Robin VanBuskirk	Superintendent
Hardin Northern Local School District	Jeff Price	Superintendent

Indian Lake Schools	Rob Underwood	Superintendent
Kenton City School District	Chad Thrush	Superintendent
Ridgemont Local School District	Chris Pfister	Superintendent
Riverdale Local School District	Greg Rossman	Superintendent
Upper Scioto Valley Local School District	Craig Hurley	Superintendent
FLR Insurance Center	Chelsea Ward	Agent
Newland Heydinger Insurance Co.	Chad Heydinger	Agent; Owner
Nationwide Insurance	Beryl Rogers	Agent; Rotary Club
Ohio Department of Natural Resources	Ryan Kennedy	Wildlife Officer
County Commissioners Assn. of Ohio	James Hale	Risk Control Consultant
Heritage Cooperative	Randy Scharf	Representative
AEP	Eric Walton	Supervisor
AEP	Christopher Shaheen	Representative
Sheldon Gas Company; RU Sheldon and Sons Directional Boring (business)	Richard Walden	Owner
Mid-Ohio Energy	General Employee Invitation	Employees
Quest Federal Credit Union	Matthew Jennings	President
Kenton Times	Joel McCollough	Reporter
WKTN Radio	Dennis Beverly	Reporter
WKTN Radio	Chad Spencer	Station Manager
Small Business Owner	Neil Blair	Owner
Layman Farms	Genny Layman	Owner; Farm Bureau
Layman Farms	Jerry Layman	Farmer
VanScoy Farms	Wes VanScoy	Owner; Farm Bureau
Dulynn Farms	Derek Snider	Owner; Farm Bureau; Ag Credit Association
Landtech	Craig Eibling	Owner

1.2.3 Planning Team Engagement

The plan development schedule included **two days** of work sessions with **stakeholders**. Because achieving meaningful participation from a wide range of partners through these sessions was important to the EMA and Contractor, the meeting schedule was developed to **address specific topics of interest to the participants in a concise and discussion-based format**. **The Contractor was flexible if stakeholders needed to comment on topics other than the agenda items due to their availability**. Conference calls were offered as make up sessions.

In rural counties, officials and workers often are responsible for multiple functions and have multiple authorities across jurisdictions. This is especially true for mapping and valuation responsibilities as well as development planning and construction approvals. **Many volunteers who represent fire service, EMS, or other community groups also are an elected official and represent their employer for other issues, all at the same time**. These individuals work together on a regular basis, and they are accustomed to considering multiple objectives simultaneously. This multi-tasking was evident in meetings where various viewpoints were expressed, evaluated, and resolved. Many representatives were quick to bring up the interests of another specialty group, and shared thoughts and suggestions among one another for mitigation

concerns. The familiarity between professionals was very conducive to development of a broadly based and inclusive mitigation strategy and implementation plan.

Invitations to meetings and work sessions were sent to stakeholders by e-mail because this was the most expedient and efficient method of delivering the information. **Changes to the contact list were noted and changed throughout the project with the intention of having as accurate a list as possible for the final draft plan review announcements.** As a new year began in January, the list of elected officials was updated, and a few retirements and position changes were made on the contact list to ensure that broad participation was maintained throughout the planning period.

In invitations and during meetings, participants were repeatedly advised that the mitigation planning process was open to the public. Meeting dates were announced to a wide audience and jurisdictions were encouraged to extend invitations to employees, community organizations, and residents. **Media representatives were invited to all meetings and work sessions.** News releases announcing meeting dates and locations were sent to local media for print and online publication and flyers were posted in county and jurisdiction office buildings. Participants were encouraged to share announcements, notices, and information with coworkers, friend, neighbors, family, and community members as much as possible. Contact information for the EMA and Contractor was freely distributed to all participants so that all community members could ask questions, provide input, or otherwise become involved in the planning process.

When specific jurisdictions or special interest groups did not respond to invitations, the Contractor and the EMA Director worked together to contact them individually. The EMA Director worked with the Hardin County Commissioners and Hardin County Prosecuting Attorney to encourage jurisdictions to participate, and to advise them of the consequences should they purposely not participate. They were all advised that to be included in and covered by the new mitigation plan, and to be eligible to apply for and receive funding for projects, their participation was mandatory.

Throughout the process, the planning team members were encouraged to share the information with additional colleagues and community members who may wish to participate. The Contractor's website was utilized to post draft documents for open review because the open format made content readily available to stakeholders and the public. The Contractor could quickly and easily update the content, providing the planning team with up-to-date information. Participating jurisdictions were encouraged to post a link to the project website on their agency websites to further facilitate community input and feedback.

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Garnering broad community participation in the mitigation planning process was a focus of the Contractor and EMA. Utilizing FEMA's whole community planning concept, the EMA reached out to a broad scope of community partners, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and stakeholders. These representatives were invited to participate and provide input throughout

the planning process. This began with the development of a broad and inclusive planning team invitation. A significant amount of time was dedicated to identifying contacts across all areas and segments of the county and creating an accurate contact list of those individuals. Invitations and reminders were sent to the planning team multiple times. Participants were encouraged to share meeting information with colleagues and community members and encourage others to participate in the planning process.

At all planning team meeting, the EMA Director and the Contractor informed attendees that all meetings were open to the public and the process of updating the plan was completely transparent. They also shared that the current hazard mitigation plan was available for review on the [OEMA mitigation portal](#). Participants were encouraged to review that document so that they could develop familiarity with previously identified mitigation strategies and compare that information to current risks and vulnerabilities when providing input into new mitigation strategies. Participants were also encouraged to share meeting invitations, notices, survey links, and other relevant information with colleagues, community members, and others that may have an interest in participating in the project.

A complete draft of the plan was posted on the Contractor’s project website from [March 17 through March 31, 2023](#) for a fifteen-day public review period. The plan was available at the Hardin County EMA for that same period, and news releases included the option to look at the printed plan there.

All agency and jurisdiction representatives who participated on the planning team were notified of this review period and process by email. To notify the public, the EMA submitted a news release that was published in the *Kenton Times* on [March 22, 23 and 24, 2023](#). [The Kenton radio station, WKTN, broadcast notice of the final meeting and the posted plan on March 16, 2023 and also posted the same information on their social media platform](#). The EMA provided a notice and link to the plan on their agency website and asked other organizations to do the same. All notifications included a link to the website where the plan was posted, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments. Posters were placed on jurisdiction bulletin boards and community boards across the county.

A printed copy of the plan was available at the Hardin County EMA during regular business hours from [March 17 – 31, 2023](#) for anyone wishing to view and comment on the plan in person.

Table 1-3 Project Participants Attending Meetings

Name	Organization
Tim Striker	Hardin County Commissioner
Chelsea Wood	FLR Insurance (Hardin County)
Cindy Murray	City of Kenton Safety Service Director
Ryan Taylor	Hardin County Engineer
Scott Holbrook	Hardin Sheriff’s Office

Jake Burgbacher	EMA Director
Burl Helton	City of Kenton Street Department
Trent Bass	Hardin County Engineer's Office
Jamie Hall	Village of Ada
Mark Badertscher	OSU Extension
Chad Smith	BKP Ambulance Chief (Kenton, 7 Townships)
Donny Southward	Village of Forest Police Chief
Joel McCullough	Kenton News
M. Sally Newfer	Roundhead Township
D. Bruce Donnelly	City of Kenton Fire Department
Emily Roy	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Dennis Musser	City of Kenton Police Chief
Daryl Flowers	Goshen Township; Red Cross; Food Bank
Mike Holland	Dudley Township
Mark Lowery	Hardin SWCD and Upper Scioto Conservancy
Luke Underwood	Hardin County Engineer
Abraham Oakes	LEPC
Roger Crowe	Hardin County Commissioner; Buck Township
Ryan Kennedy	ODNR Game Warden
Rob Wilson	Blanchard Twp. Trustee/Agricultural Society
Sharon Huston	Hardin Hills (Long term care)
Denise Althausser	Hardin County Treasurer
Stephanie McCollough	Board of Elections Deputy Director
Jerry Brose	Mt. Victory Mayor
Nate Saylor	Hardin County GIS
Amy Newland	Hardin County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Paul Osborne	Veteran's Affairs, Village of Alger, Marion Twp.
Cris Huley	USV Schools (Villages of Alger and McGuffey, townships)
Chris Pfister	Superintendent, Ridgemont Schools (Villages of Mt. Victory and Ridgeway)
Dan Lee	Principal, Ada Local Schools
Dennis Barnes	Hardin County Sheriff's Office
Justin Dick	Hardin County Public Health
Alec Cooper	Ada Police Department
Mike Leddy	Kenton City Schools
Wade Melton	Hardin School Director
Dean Hankins	Mayor, Village of Forest
Sean Young	Administrator, Village of Forest
Michelle Wright	Ohio Health Hardin Memorial Hospital
Keith Everhart	Hardin County Sheriff

Andrea Helton	USV EMS (Villages of Alger, McGuffey)
Matthew Moulter	Village of McGuffey, Mayor
Jonathan Osborne	Village of Alger Fire Department
Kevin Howland	Village of Ridgeway
Joseph Holtzberger	Village of Patterson
Teresa Cramer	Village of Dunkirk

Table 1.4 Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Participation Summary

Multi-Jurisdictional Participation in Mitigation Plan Development						
Jurisdiction	Planning Process	Risk Assessment	Strategy Review & Development	Plan Maintenance	Plan Update	Plan Adoption (In process)
Hardin County	11-16-22 11-17-22	11-16-22 11-17-22	11-16-22 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
City of Kenton	11-16-22 11-17-22	11-16-22 11-17-22	3-16-23 Survey Email	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of Ada	11-16-22	11-16-22	3-16-23 Survey Email	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of Alger	3-16-22	3-16-23	3-16-23 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of Dunkirk			Survey			Yes
Village of Forest	11-16-22	11-16-22	3-16-23 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of McGuffey	3-16-23	3-16-23	3-16-23 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of Mount Victory	3-16-23	3-16-23	3-16-23 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes
Village of Patterson			Survey			Yes
Village of Ridgeway	3-16-23	3-16-23	3-16-23 Survey	3-16-23	3-16-23	Yes

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

A significant amount of research was performed to develop the hazard mitigation plan, which is based on multiple sources of information. Research was conducted through reviews of existing data, plans, and reports and through interviews and conversations with county stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

Hardin County's most recent plan was approved in 2018. All mitigation goals and strategies identified in that plan were evaluated and outcomes documented; those findings appear in section 3.a of this plan.

Additional information was identified through research of recorded events from the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database. Incidents that were researched included data from previous plans, and new incidents [starting January 1, 2018 and ending December 31, 2022](#) so that the most recent storms were included. Data was presented to the stakeholders represented on the planning team. Their knowledge of the impact, consequences, and recovery efforts of any past disaster incident was documented. These anecdotal points were included as appropriate in the revised plan.

The county profile includes information discovered through the study of various county documents. Information about community development, business and industry, land use regulations, and community life were researched and findings that were relevant to mitigation planning were included as parts of narratives and explanations. Online sources based upon the US Census Bureau data from 2020 were accessed for statistical data. Federal, state, and local government agency websites and reports were utilized for statistical and historic information.

The hazard identification was developed through research of actual recorded events based on records from the Storm Events Database of the National Climatic Data Center. Supporting data was obtained from the Ohio EMA, FEMA, Tornado History Project, Stanford University Dam Program, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and other anecdotal sources. Planning team members provided additional detail, context, and descriptions of the community impact for many historical incidents. The most significant events for each hazard are described in narrative form in the HIRA. Appendix A includes a complete list of all recorded occurrences of each hazard, organized by type of hazard.

The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis were informed by multiple data sources. HAZUS projections helped establish potential losses in flood and earthquake incidents. The auditor provided property valuations for residential, commercial, agricultural, and exempt properties and mapping information. Current critical facility and key resource inventories were used to project loss estimates for those facilities. The [2018 Hardin County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) contained information that was still reflective of risks, vulnerabilities, and conditions, which were retained in this plan where applicable. [The State of Ohio Enhanced Mitigation Plan was referenced for various pieces of information.](#) FEMA documents were referenced to identify how many losses were reported, when, and because of what impact in the past. Included in this estimation were possibility, probability, magnitude, and frequency of each category of hazard and its potential impact upon Hardin County. [Several new resources are identified in the HIRA where social vulnerability and community resilience information was found; this information was all based upon data gathered in the 2020 US Census. The National Risk Index was used to support and expand the HAZUS reports included in this plan. The HAZUS 100-year flood and 5.0 earthquake projections are included in Appendix A.](#)

Hardin County is GIS mapped and flood plains are clearly identified consistently with the most recent FEMA flood risk mapping project. [While Hardin County does not have fully approved new flood maps, the anticipated maps are available and were used for the discussions and](#)

strategy development. The HAZUS 100-year flood projection is based upon the currently approved maps due to system constraints.

Table 1-4 provides a list of the sources utilized in the research phase of this project.

Table 1-4: Studies, Reports, and References

Document	Author/Agency	Date
Upper Great Miami Watershed Discovery Report	FEMA	2002
Hardin County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)	Hardin County Department of Health	2020-22
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUP)	United States Department of Agriculture	2019
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2022
Ground Water Potential Pollution Study	US Geological Service	1989/ 2004 update
HAZUS Flood and Earthquake data	Ohio EMA	2022
Hardin County Business Alliance Economic Development Profile and Five-Year Strategic Plan	Hardin County Business Alliance and Chamber of Commerce	n.d.
Hardin County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2018	Hardin County EMA	2018
Hardin County Hazard Profile and Risk Assessment (Collection of local notes and research after severe storms and incidents dating back to approximately 2001)	EMA	2001
Soil Survey of Hardin County	USDA	1979
State of Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019
National Centers for Environmental Information Storm Events Database	NOAA	2022
United States Census	US Census Bureau	2020
Western Ohio Cropland Values	Ohio State University	2014
Greater Upper Miami River TDML Report	Ohio Environmental Protection Agency	March 2012
Auglaize Watershed Assessment Report	Auglaize Watershed Coalition	n. d.
Scioto River (Upper) TDML Report	Ohio Environmental Protection Agency	July 2014
National Risk Index	FEMA	2022
Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	FEMA	2020
Resilience Analysis Planning Tool	FEMA	2022
Climate and Risk Resilience Portal	FEMA	2022
Ohio Department of Natural Resources GIS Mapping	ODNR	2022
Ohio Department of Agriculture Invasive species list	ODA	2022

1.5 PLAN MAINTENANCE

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan. Diligent plan maintenance establishes a schedule to re-engage stakeholders in the mitigation plan at regular intervals and

lays a solid groundwork for the required five-year update. By reviewing disaster occurrences on an annual basis and frequently assessing the county's progress on mitigation activities, a five-year update can be a quick and efficient process. Working to formalize relationships between emergency management and community development, land use planning, and economic development can cause mitigation to become a community-wide concern, and goals for sustainable improvements can be a desirable outcome. Upon approval of this plan, Hardin County intends to follow a regular plan maintenance schedule. The EMA will lead this effort and involve stakeholders, jurisdictions, and the community, laying a solid foundation for the plan update in late 2022.

Hardin County conducted annual reviews in 2021 and 2022. The restrictions on public meetings from early 2020 through mid-2021 prevented earlier collective reviews. Both of these meetings were well-attended and productive. The mid-term collection of data, anecdotal information, and storm review enabled the latest discussions to focus more on new concerns, new vulnerabilities, and solutions that were not apparent five years ago. Hardin County plans to continue this process into the coming five-year plan validity period.

1.5.1 Plan Maintenance Methodology

A significant challenge in conducting annual plan review is the difficulty in holding meetings that are well attended. Sometimes stakeholders perceive these meetings as not critical and do not attend. Government officials, community leaders, and other key stakeholders also have busy schedules and competing demands on their time and must prioritize their attendance at different events. In rural Hardin County, most jurisdictions and organizations have few employees, if any. In the villages and townships, many elected and appointed officials serve in a part-time or volunteer capacity, and hold full-time jobs elsewhere that occupy their daytime hours. These staffing realities often make conducting community-wide meetings a challenge. Residents and officials proved through their participation in this plan's development that they are willing to dedicate the time and effort needed to engage in whole community planning if meetings are scheduled conveniently and time is used efficiently. Hardin County's plan maintenance strategy attempts to address this need by incorporating other communication and data-collection methods throughout the five-year life of the plan. However, given the value of the two mid-term updates that were held, and the impact the information gathered at those meeting had on this process, stakeholders can identify the value of these reviews.

Traditional face-to-face meetings have been the most common method to discuss disaster responses, catastrophic incidents, and storms. Given the challenges in scheduling these, Hardin County may choose to utilize webinars, conference calls, electronic surveys, and/or questionnaires to collect feedback from stakeholders as an alternative. Digital surveys that are simple to complete and straightforward in their approach are much more accepted than in the past. These options are utilized frequently in today's business environment and will be accessible to most stakeholders. When these options are selected, stakeholders will be asked to dedicate the same attention to the task as they would an in-person meeting. Meetings may be available by multiple means, allowing those who miss face-to-face meetings to contribute

digitally or at an alternate time. Records of participation, copies of results, and other communication surrounding these events will be maintained just as it would be for a meeting.

Through mitigation efforts in the past six years, the Hardin County EMA has been able to forge relationships with parties that would otherwise not be commonly included in emergency management activities. Planning bodies like the Chamber and Business Alliance and the mental health board are relatively new; cross-representation in those organizations will facilitate mitigation inclusion in community development, regulation development, and vulnerability management. Inclusion of emergency management concepts and concerns in social services such as the Department of Job and Family Services will enable constant monitoring and serving disadvantaged populations. Constant contact with the agricultural community will facilitate services such as those needed by non-English-speaking farm worker programs. These broad-based efforts to reach out and become engrained in countywide services will continue through the next five years.

1.5.2 Annual Plan Review

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team, inclusive of all jurisdictions and special interest groups, will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, on or about the anniversary of the plan approval date. Annual plan maintenance discussions may be conducted through traditional in-person meetings or webinars, electronic surveys, questionnaires, or other forms of communication. The choice of methodology will be at the discretion of the EMA Director based on what best meets the needs of stakeholders and ensures that mitigation strategies are considered on a regular basis. All information-gathering efforts will include evaluation of the past year's disaster incidents and a summary of the resulting damages, costs, and recovery efforts. Status reports on any mitigation projects in process and an update on progress towards achieving the mitigation strategies and actions developed by each jurisdiction will also be included. The EMA will maintain records of these annual discussions.

As part of the annual review process, jurisdictions will be asked to conduct an internal analysis of the mitigation strategies developed by their jurisdiction and submit a short report to the EMA with their findings. The report will include an assessment of any disaster incidents that occurred during the year, a summary of damages and recovery efforts, and a report on the status of adopted mitigation strategies as a result of those incidents. If a strategy has been completed, the jurisdiction will evaluate its effectiveness at reducing losses. This information will be shared with the countywide planning team during the annual countywide review process. The EMA will maintain a summary of these reports and findings.

The EMA may choose to convene a planning team meeting after any significant disaster or large-scale emergency to review and document any changes, needs, additions, or deletions that should be considered at the five-year update. Mitigation actions should be discussed related to any specific incident that happens. The EMA will maintain records of these meetings and findings.

At each review point, the EMA will review the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment for completeness and accuracy. Loss estimates will be evaluated for ongoing accuracy and any significant developments will be added to the list and mitigation strategies will be reviewed for progress and effectiveness. All findings will be recorded and saved for the 2022 update process.

1.5.3 Community Participation

While the EMA is responsible for leading the plan maintenance effort, that process only works if stakeholders are engaged. Ongoing consideration of hazard mitigation strategies is critical to creating a resilient and sustainable community. It is the EMA's intention that the stakeholders representing the municipalities, jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations involved in plan development will continue to participate in its ongoing review and maintenance. Without their participation, ongoing input will not be comprehensive or accurate. Therefore, all parties involved in developing this plan must understand that the annual review process is critical to the pre- and post-disaster welfare of the county.

Public involvement is an important component of ongoing mitigation planning efforts. To encourage public involvement in plan maintenance, notices of annual plan review activities will be published through local media and appropriate websites and social media accounts of participating jurisdictions and agencies. The general public will be invited to participate in these activities and provide input. Meeting announcements will include the date, time, and location of the session and adequate notice in accordance with relevant requirements. As with all meetings conducted during plan development, annual update meetings will be open to the public and community input will be encouraged. If surveys and other electronic tools are utilized to collect feedback from stakeholders, these documents will also be made available to the community.

1.5.4 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms

Local government participation in plan maintenance activities is a major factor in the implementation and achievement of mitigation strategies as well as assessment for new and additional mitigation actions. This participation occurs during intentional mitigation plan review and, more importantly, during daily operations within each jurisdiction that guide the growth and development of specific communities. Most jurisdictions in the county have a committee within the jurisdiction's elected council that addresses growth and development issues within the municipality. These commissions and committees are responsible to the jurisdiction's top elected official, who is then responsible for working with the Hardin County officials who hold similar responsibility at the county government level.

An additional function of jurisdiction planning commissions and committees is to provide leadership for new development and business or residential growth in the community that complies with Hardin County development goals and standards. They work closely with the Business Alliance and Chamber of Commerce. These entities determine what growth initiatives are implemented by the municipalities and provide leadership for recruiting, promoting, and securing new industries, businesses, and residential facilities. These groups work with the

county officials who guide the construction of new buildings and homes, and who oversee and inspect new structures.

At the county level, Hardin County's Business Alliance is charged with developing a long-term comprehensive plan to guide the county's growth and development, including the use of land and resources. The Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance is an active development organization that guides county development and provides leadership to grow and improve the community. They meet regularly and maintain relationships with the county engineer's office, zoning and code enforcement officials, health department personnel, municipalities, and townships as well as at-large representatives. This organization works with jurisdictions to apply land use guidance across the county. At this time, there is no representation from emergency management on the Chamber and Business Alliance. As an outcome of the hazard mitigation planning process, the county identified that as a gap in addressing hazard mitigation and is considering how to incorporate that expertise into their work.

The floodplain manager, GIS coordinator and Tax Map Office are all part of the Hardin County Engineer's Office. Lenders work with the floodplain manager to comply with flood prevention regulations as part of the lending process. Most commercial development is reviewed by the appropriate officials before construction takes place, and as part of the loan process. Properties must be surveyed and confirmed to be or not be located in a flood plain before permits are issued and mortgages are approved. Any property utilizing federal funding to build or renovate must have flood insurance if the property is located in a flood plain, and lenders require mortgaged property to have flood insurance. Currently, the consideration of mitigation measures during development is unstructured, but the EMA is the lead county organization charged with support and coordination for mitigation planning and implementation. Hardin County officials have included development of EMA involvement in development and comprehensive planning as a mitigation strategy in this plan.

The county will strive to consider hazard mitigation across all other community planning efforts, especially in the comprehensive plan, and intends to include information about hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities in all planning areas. The EMA will lead efforts to integrate mitigation planning into economic development, land use planning, land use regulation, conservation, response plans, and other plans that are important to the daily operation of the county, assisted by other county and business organizations. Disaster mitigation will be promoted as part of community development, making its way into a comprehensive array of disciplines and interests. Key stakeholders, including the County Commissioners, Economic Development, Chamber and Business Alliance, Floodplain Administrator, Engineer's Office, zoning officials, and public safety officers from across Hardin County will be important partners in this effort. These individuals will work through their respective agencies to promote mitigation planning and its inclusion in the plans, procedures, guidelines, and priorities of each agency, thus making mitigation a true community-wide effort.

1.5.5 Documentation of Plan Maintenance

Hardin County will consider communication with stakeholders and the public regarding hazard mitigation to be an annual necessity. The EMA will schedule, complete, and record these communications and the results of all meetings to facilitate an expeditious plan update in 2022. It will be the EMA's responsibility to maintain documentation of all ongoing plan maintenance activities. These records should include the date, time, and attendance at review meetings, findings of each review, and recommendations from stakeholders for changes, additions, or deletions at the next update. Results from any surveys and questionnaires used to collect information should be maintained, as well as reports submitted by jurisdictions. E-mail and written communication from stakeholders and the public should be saved for consideration during annual review activities. All reports, documents, and files can be saved electronically so that they are easier to find and less cumbersome to maintain.

1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle

Hardin County's Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2028. With generous documentation of ongoing plan maintenance, the county should be positioned to submit an updated plan well before the current plan's expiration date. To ensure the appropriate timeline is met, formal efforts to update the plan will begin in 2027. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.