

1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

To develop a multi- jurisdictional mitigation plan that reflects Huron County's unique hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities, the Huron County EMA engaged in a comprehensive, whole community planning process. This process included direct participation from stakeholders and community members across the county, representing cities, villages, townships, county government departments, and community organizations. This section describes the process utilized to develop the plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were included throughout the process.

1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Because of the stakeholder feedback necessary to develop a thorough and complete mitigation plan, the EMA anticipated that the mitigation planning process would take twelve to eighteen months. This timeframe was necessary to research the county's hazards and risks, meet with jurisdiction representatives and stakeholders, develop mitigation strategies and actions, and write the revised plan. Upon completion of the plan, the state and federal review process was anticipated to take three to four additional months. This section outlines each phase of the plan development process. Because the federal standards for mitigation plans have changed significantly since the county's last plan was adopted, the EMA decided to create a replacement plan instead of revising the county's previously approved plan.

1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning Process

Huron County's most recent mitigation plan was adopted March 12, 2012 and expired November 30, 2016. Because of the scope of work necessary to update the plan, the EMA determined it would be most efficient to hire a contractor to conduct the project. In April 2018, the county entered into a contract Resource Solutions Associates, LLC to coordinate the project, work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to collect information, and develop the new plan. In the fall of 2017, the EMA and Contractor developed a project timeline. The timeline began with an initial planning meeting in October 2017 and culminated with a completed plan submitted to Ohio EMA and FEMA for review in late 2018. The county anticipated adopting the approved plan in early 2019.

1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings

The Contractor's initial step in the planning process was developing a master list of stakeholders and community members with input and feedback from the EMA. The list included representatives from all jurisdictions (county, cities, villages, and townships) as well as broad range of community organizations and agencies that spanned community development, natural resources, business and industry, agriculture, and institutions. This whole community-based hazard mitigation planning team met multiple times throughout the planning process. Work sessions and meetings were conducted in four phases: project introduction, hazard identification and risk assessment, mitigation strategy development, and plan review. Sessions were held at multiple locations to encourage broad participation across the county. Because of

varying work schedules, sessions were scheduled at different times of the day. Many city and county employees required daytime meetings during their regular work day. Because officials in townships and rural communities are often volunteers with full-time jobs, evening meetings were coordinated to accommodate their schedules.

Project Kick Off

The initial countywide planning meeting was held at the Huron County EMA on October 18, 2017. This meeting introduced stakeholders to the project, ensuring their understanding of the scope of the plan and involvement in its development. The Contractor discussed the importance of hazard mitigation within emergency management and the process the EMA and Contractor would utilize to develop the plan. Jurisdictions were asked to identify a primary point-of-contact who would coordinate with the EMA to schedule jurisdiction work sessions.

Hazard and Risk Identification Work Sessions

The hazard and risk identification phase focused on research and information gathering. Jurisdiction-specific work sessions were conducted in November and December 2017. These sessions focused on identifying hazards and risks and analyzing the impact of incidents on each jurisdiction. Discussions covered vulnerabilities across the entire county as well as in the jurisdiction where the meeting was held, and looked at not only jurisdictional damages, but damages across the county. Participants included mayors, administrators, city/village council members, trustees, fiscal officers, road/street department employees, law enforcement officials, fire service personnel, water and wastewater treatment facility staff, farmers, and other key jurisdiction employees.

Subject-focused countywide work sessions were also conducted with stakeholders representing specific groups or interests, including natural resources, economic development, land use planning, regulation, engineering, infrastructure, and GIS. As a result of these sessions, the Contractor obtained detailed information from stakeholders with specific countywide knowledge in relevant technical areas. The sessions focused on gathering hazard and risk information and discussing the impact of disasters relative to each group's specific area of expertise. Each group was asked to rank vulnerabilities according to jurisdiction; that input was used to prioritize hazards for each area as required in federal plan guidance.

Mitigation Strategy Development Work Sessions

Work sessions to address mitigation strategies were conducted in November 2018. These sessions focused on developing countywide and jurisdiction-specific mitigation goals and strategies based on the hazards and risks identified during the previous sessions. The strategy development sessions included the same broad scope of invitees as the hazard and risk identification meetings and provided a forum for local officials and stakeholders to discuss specific actions to help reduce disaster risk in their community. While there was a focus on those jurisdictions in attendance, discussions included strategies and actions across the county. Many vulnerabilities and the resulting strategies were consistent and countywide while others were very specific to one or two areas or took on unique characteristics due to a particular feature of a specific area. These sessions also included a review and progress assessment of the

mitigation strategies identified in the county's 2011 plan; progress on the previously identified goals was documented for inclusion in the new plan and those strategies that were to be continued were incorporated into the revised new plan strategies.

Final Plan Review

After extensive discussion with the planning team, the Contractor developed a draft plan. All stakeholders were provided with access to the plan through the Contractor's website and were asked to provide comments and feedback. A printed copy of the draft plan was available at the Huron County EMA for anyone with limited computer access.

Stakeholders and the public were invited to a countywide final plan review forum on January 3, 2019 to provide any final comments, ask questions, and learn about the EMA's plan implementation process.

Following the final plan review meeting, a public review period was conducted. From December 14, 2018 through January 4, 2019, the plan continued to be available on the Contractor's website and in print at the EMA for any member of the public to review and provide comment. The public was notified of the plan review period through news releases to local media outlets, letters to jurisdictions, and posts on the EMA's website and social media accounts. The EMA also sent a news release to the *New London Record* (New London), *Norwalk Reflector* (Norwalk), and *Willard Times Junction* (Willard) on December 13, 2018. All news releases and notices included locations where the plan could be viewed digitally 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 through the review process and recommended appropriate revisions for incorporation into the plan. Upon final revision, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA for state review before submission to FEMA for federal approval. Following 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

Date	Location	Purpose	Participating Stakeholders
10/18/2017	Huron County EMA	Project Kick Off/Initial Planning Meeting	<i>Countywide Meeting</i>
11/13/2017	Norwalk General Services Department Office	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Norwalk
11/14/2017	Willard Municipal Building	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Willard
11/14/2017	Greenwich Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Greenwich

Date	Location	Purpose	Participating Stakeholders
11/15/2017	Huron County EMA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Norwalk Township
11/20/2017	Huron County EMA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Countywide Meeting Huron County Auditor Clarksfield Township
11/21/2017	Huron County EMA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Countywide Meeting Huron County Auditor Huron County Tax Map Office Fischer Titus Medical Center OSU Extension Service
11/29/2017	New London Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	New London Firelands Ambulance
12/11/2017	Monroeville Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Monroeville Huron County ARES
11/8/2018	Willard High School	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Willard City Schools
11/14/2018	Willard Fire Department	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Countywide Meeting Fire Departments
11/26/2018	Huron County EMA	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	Norwalk
11/26/2018	Huron County EMA	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	New London
11/26/2018	Huron County EMA	911/Communications Strategy Review	Huron County EMA
11/26/2018	Wakeman Village Hall	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	Wakeman
11/26/2018	North Fairfield Village Hall	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	North Fairfield
11/27/2018	Huron County EMA	Engineer Strategy Review	Huron County Engineer
11/27/2018	Huron County EMA	Natural Resources Strategy Review	Huron County Soil and Water Conservation District
11/27/2018	Huron County EMA	Development Strategy Review	Norwalk Economic Development Corporation
11/29/2018	Huron County EMA	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	Greenwich
12/13/2018	Greenfield Township	Vulnerability and Strategy Review	Countywide Meeting Huron County Township Trustee Association
01/03/2019	Huron County EMA	Final Plan Review	Countywide Meeting

1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Because of Huron County's population and number of jurisdictions, the number of stakeholders engaged in the mitigation planning process was significant. The EMA reached out to a broad group of stakeholders to encourage participation in the hazard mitigation planning team. To achieve this, the EMA used a whole community approach. An inclusive list of planning team members was developed with the intention of including all jurisdictions, organizations, and agencies with an interest or role in disaster mitigation.

Invitations to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team were extended to the following officials, leaders, and stakeholders from Huron County:

- 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, education and academia, nonprofits, social agencies, and the general public
- Elected officials, including the county auditor, treasurer, engineer, and commissioners
- Appointed officials, including the county floodplain manager, GIS mapping specialist, conservation specialists, development officials, fire chiefs, police chiefs, public health commissioners, extension agents
- Economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and tourism bureaus
- Emergency management officials from adjacent counties
- Non-government agencies and community action groups
- Special interest groups such as watershed coalitions, conservancy districts, federal partners, and state agencies with facilities in the county
- Residents, businesses, and the general public

Stakeholders were advised that all planning activities were open to the public and any constituent or resident was welcome and encouraged to participate.

1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation

All incorporated jurisdictions in Huron County elected to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan, with three exceptions. The villages of Milan and Plymouth and the city of Bellevue are only partially located in Huron County. Because they are primarily located in adjacent counties, they participate in their primary county's hazard mitigation plan. Bellevue is included in the Sandusky County plan, Milan participates in Erie County's plan, and Plymouth participates in the plan for Richland County. Upon approval, Huron County and all participating incorporated jurisdictions (cities and villages) are expected to formally adopt the hazard mitigation plan.

For the purposes of plan adoption and potential grant administration, Huron County is authorized to act on behalf of the townships. Most townships elected to participate in the planning work sessions and contributed significantly to the process. This broad participation

ensured that all interests across the county, including rural and suburban areas, were represented. Because so many individuals fill more than one leadership role in the county, there was significant multi-jurisdictional consideration throughout the planning process, emphasizing the countywide focus of mitigation planning and implementation.

The officials identified in Table 1-2 served as the primary representative and point of contact for each jurisdiction. The EMA coordinated with these individuals to schedule work sessions. A complete list of all individuals who participated in the mitigation planning process is provided in Appendix A: Mitigation Planning Team.

Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdictions and Primary Representatives

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
COUNTY		
Huron County	EMA Director	Art Meade
MUNICIPALITIES		
Greenwich	Village Administrator	Virgil Giles
Monroeville	Village Administrator	Tom Gray
New London	Village Administrator	Shawn Pickworth
North Fairfield	Mayor	Joshua Radcliffe
Norwalk	Safety Service Director	Dan Wendt (through 8/2018) Ellen Heinz (as of 10/2018)
Wakeman	Fiscal Officer	Trish Summers
Willard	City Manager	Jim Ludban

1.2.2 Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

To encourage broad countywide participation in the planning process, a large group of stakeholders were included in the planning process. Using multiple information sources, including but not limited to EMA contact lists, jurisdiction and agency websites, and the Board of Elections, a master planning team of more than 100 people was developed. The master list identified the name, position, agency or jurisdiction, and contact information for each individual; it included representation from business and industry, community services, economic and community development, education, government, infrastructure and engineering, natural resources, and public safety.

Throughout the planning process, more than 50 people representing the identified jurisdictions and organizations contributed to the planning process. The complete list of participating stakeholders is provided in Appendix A: Hazard Mitigation Planning Team.

The planning team's participation occurred over four phases of plan development: kick-off meeting, hazard identification and risk assessment, mitigation strategy development, and final plan review. The plan development schedule included several rounds of jurisdiction work sessions with additional small group meetings scheduled throughout. The schedule was developed to provide multiple opportunities for stakeholder participation that considered a wide variety of schedule conflicts, work situations, and other issues.

Most meeting invitations were sent by e-mail as this was the quickest and most efficient communication method. When necessary, EMA staff reached out to stakeholders by phone or through other communication mechanisms to ensure delivery of the information. The EMA and Contractor worked together to establish and maintain a list of respondents so those who had not yet been involved could easily be identified. The Director then reached out to non-respondents individually to encourage them to participate.

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Throughout the planning process, the EMA identified comprehensive community participation as a priority. Utilizing FEMA's Whole Community Planning concept, the EMA reached out to partners, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and stakeholders across the community and invited them to participate and provide input through all phases of the planning process. Initially, the EMA and Contractor dedicated significant time to identifying contacts across all jurisdictions, subject-areas, and segments of the county and creating an accurate contact list of those individuals. Collectively, this list was referred to as the mitigation planning team, and they were invited to all work sessions throughout the process. Meetings and work sessions were also open to the public and participants were encouraged to attend all meeting that fit their schedule. Stakeholders were encouraged to invite others from their jurisdiction or agency, or the general public.

The county's current hazard mitigation plan was made available for the planning team's review on the Contractor's website; participants were encouraged to review that document prior to any work sessions to facilitate discussions. Attendees were also encouraged to share meeting invitations, plan documents, and all information with colleagues, community members, and others who may have an interest in participating in the project.

Each jurisdiction was asked to provide input about recent incidents, damage and casualties from storms and other hazards. They were asked to list and prioritize the hazards in their jurisdiction, and to assess how hazards impacting other jurisdictions might affect them. They were asked to list the mitigation needs of the jurisdiction, including any action or project that might help reduce damages and decrease impact of any hazard. Special populations, critical infrastructure, and high-risk facilities were discussed in this context, and potential vulnerabilities were assessed. This information was compiled to develop the draft HIRA and strategies sections.

As the vulnerability statements and potential strategies were developed for each jurisdiction, those draft documents were shared with officials. The jurisdictions were asked to share the draft document with other officials, employees, and residents for feedback. The vulnerability statements and draft strategies were copied and mailed to every jurisdiction to make it easy for them to review their jurisdiction's information. Changes were made as the jurisdictions responded, including clarifications and expansion of some information.

Upon completion of the draft plan, the document was posted on the Contractor's website for public review. A public review period was conducted from December 14, 2018 through January 4, 2019. A final countywide plan review forum was conducted on January 3, 2019. This forum was open to the public and provided all stakeholders with the opportunity to view and comment on the plan. It also provided an opportunity to discuss multi-jurisdictional implementation, ongoing countywide participation, and annual review by all jurisdictions in the coming five years. All submitted comments were reviewed by the EMA Director and Contractor and incorporated into the plan as appropriate.

The public was notified of this review period and plan review forum through notifications sent to the planning team, registered letters to jurisdictions, posts on the EMA's website and social media accounts, and a news release submitted to the *New London Record* (New London), *Norwalk Reflector* (Norwalk), and *Willard Times Junction* (Willard). The EMA director and the contractor called any jurisdictions who did not respond, or if there were clarifications of their feedback needed. Jurisdictions were encouraged to share the invitation on their website and social media pages. All notifications included a link to view the plan online, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments and questions. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Huron County EMA during regular business hours for anyone who preferred to view a printed copy of the plan.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Extensive research was conducted during the planning process. This included reviews of existing data, plans, and reports and detailed discussions with stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

To develop the county profile, various county and jurisdiction documents and plans were utilized. This research included information about community development, business and industry, land use regulations, and community life. Demographic and statistical information came from the U.S. Census Bureau and other government sources. Jurisdiction websites provided additional local information. Huron County's comprehensive land use plan was consulted for information about individual communities, development goals, building and development restrictions and regulations, and countywide goals and objectives for community growth. The cities supported that information with their corresponding jurisdictional documents. The floodplain manager provided information about community participation in NFIP and CRS, and communities provided jurisdictional documents and websites that confirmed and explained collaboration between jurisdictions and the county. Watershed plans and government discovery reports were consulted for information about local rivers, creeks, and streams.

The plan incorporates local disaster history prior to 2011 based on the current mitigation plan and disaster data and hazard occurrences from 2011 through 2018. This information was researched through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Storm Events Database, Ohio EMA, FEMA, Tornado History Project, Stanford University Dam Program,

Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and other federal, state, and private sources. This information was shared with stakeholders during planning team work sessions so that local knowledge of the impact, consequences, and recovery efforts of incidents was incorporated into the county's hazard history. Appendix B: Hazard and Vulnerability Data includes a complete list of all recorded occurrences of each hazard, organized by type.

The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis are based on multiple data sources. HAZUS projections helped establish potential losses in flood and earthquake incidents. Property values were provided by the County Auditor, who also provided mapping support through the tax map office. Because the 2011 mitigation plan contained information that still reflected countywide risks, vulnerabilities, and conditions, that information was retained and included in the revised plan. FEMA records provided additional loss data based on federal disaster assistance provided in the county. The State of Ohio Enhanced Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2014) provided additional data and explanation.

Multiple sources provided information on Huron County's agriculture industry and natural resources. These include watershed reports published by ODNR, US EPA documents, reports developed by local government agencies and watershed coalitions, and others as identified in Table 1-4. This information was combined with discussions with stakeholders and subject-matter experts to develop the mitigation plan. Local Soil and Water Conservation District, Ohio State University Extension Service, and the Natural Resource Conservation District office provided information. The USDA agricultural census supplied data regarding agriculture and production.

Table 1-4 identifies the references, reports, and studies utilized in the research phase of this project.

Table 1-4: Studies, Reports, and References

Document	Author/Agency	Date
2010 United States Census	US Census Bureau	2010
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2018
HAZUS Earthquake and Flood data	Ohio EMA	2012
Huron County Comprehensive Land Use Plan	Huron County Board of Commissioners	2017
Huron County Profile	Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research	2017
Norwalk Economic Development Corporation Strategic Priorities	Norwalk Economic Development Corporation	2018
Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2014
Soil Survey of Huron County, Ohio	US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service	1994
Storm Events Database	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2018

1.5 PLAN MAINTENANCE

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan. Regular plan maintenance establishes hazard mitigation as part of regular community development activities, provides a mechanism for the EMA to continually engage stakeholders in issues related to disaster risk reduction, and establishes a solid groundwork for the required five-year plan update. By reviewing disaster occurrences annually and assessing the county's progress on mitigation activities, a five-year mitigation plan update can be a quick and efficient process. Huron 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 2023.

1.5.1 Plan Maintenance Methodology

The most significant challenge in plan maintenance is stakeholder participation. Plan review meetings are not always well attended, leading to limited feedback and discussion of ongoing mitigation issues. Many stakeholders have competing demands on their time as they fill multiple roles in their communities and participation in plan review meetings is often a lower priority than other responsibilities. Simply scheduling a meeting that meets the needs of a wide range of participants is a challenge because some stakeholders require meetings during regular business hours while others are only available in the evening. In an effort to address these challenges, Huron County will adopt a plan maintenance methodology that utilizes multiple engagement and communication methods to meet the needs of community leaders.

The EMA will utilize a variety of the activities below in plan maintenance. Specific activities will be selected based on what will elicit the most robust participation from stakeholders.

- Jurisdiction-based meetings in cities, villages and townships
- Countywide meetings at central locations
- Written or electronic surveys/questionnaires
- Webinars/conference calls
- Post-incident review following a significant incident

As with any planning activity, the EMA will maintain documentation of participation, copies of surveys, and other communication surrounding these events.

1.5.2 Annual Plan Review

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, beginning approximately one year after the final approval of the plan and annually until the formal plan update process begins.

These annual plan maintenance discussions may be conducted through traditional in-person meetings or webinars, surveys, questionnaires, or other forms of communication. The specific methodology will be determined by the EMA Director based on what best meets the needs of stakeholders and is appropriate at that specific time. If the community has been impacted by multiple incidents during any year, a face-to-face session should be held after post-incident

response critiques are held. A comprehensive review may involve varied methods of consideration for different groups. For example, county employees may be gathered to discuss the incident, while municipalities and townships may be sent written materials and asked to submit completed documents after review at their local meetings.

Regardless of the specific method, annual plan maintenance discussions will include an assessment of disaster incidents in the previous year and a summary of the resulting damages, costs, and recovery efforts. It will define any shortages, gaps in capabilities, and ineffective loss prevention actions and any mitigation projects that would have reduced losses or eliminated costs. Status reports on mitigation projects in progress and updates on the mitigation strategies and actions developed by each jurisdiction will also be included. The EMA Director will maintain records of these annual discussions and will develop an annual list of strategy modifications to be considered in the plan update. The report will identify any reduction in losses due to a successful mitigation strategy, action, or project implementation.

As part of the review process, jurisdictions will be asked to conduct an internal analysis of mitigation strategies and actions underway in their jurisdiction or identify strategies that should be added, modified, or deferred and provide the EMA with a brief report of their findings. The report will include an assessment of disaster incidents that occurred during the year, a summary of damages and recovery efforts and a status report on the adopted mitigation strategies. If a strategy has been completed, the jurisdiction will evaluate its effectiveness in 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.

Along with these review activities, the EMA will conduct an annual review of the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and note any necessary changes. Loss estimates will be evaluated for ongoing accuracy and any progress in development, changes in regulation, or other significant differences will be noted. The EMA will also identify any significant changes in property valuations, businesses or industries, institutions or facilities; significant changes in agricultural practices, conservation practices, or livestock operations; initiation or completion of community, residential, commercial or industrial growth and development; changes in development regulations including zoning, building codes, or other regulations; modifications to NFIP participation or floodplain maps; major projects underway or completed including cleaning of rivers, ditches, and streams, installation of structurally engineered projects or devices, creation of natural habitat or runoff detention areas; changes in warning and notification equipment or procedures; and changes in any first responder capability or capacity. The EMA Director will also review the inclusion of mitigation in community development and will make recommendations for changes to the county process that will ensure that mitigation strategies are included in the implementation of growth in the countywide community. The EMA Director may add other information at his/her discretion.

1.5.3 Community Participation

While the EMA is responsible for leading plan maintenance efforts, that process is only effective if stakeholders are engaged. Ongoing consideration of hazard mitigation critical to creating a resilient and sustainable community. It is the EMA's intention that the broad group of stakeholders involved in plan development continue to participate in ongoing plan maintenance. Without their involvement, ongoing input will not be comprehensive or accurate. Therefore, all parties involved in developing this plan must perceive the annual review process as critical to the pre- and post-disaster welfare of the county. This was stressed to stakeholders throughout the plan development process.

Public involvement is an important component of ongoing mitigation efforts. Annual update meetings will be open to the public and community input will be encouraged. Public notices will be published through local media and appropriate websites and social media accounts of participating jurisdictions and agencies. Meeting announcements will include the date, time, and location of the session and adequate notice so that people have reasonable time to plan their attendance. If surveys and other electronic tools are utilized to collect feedback from stakeholders, these documents will be made available to the community and instructions provided on how to utilize these tools. Any feedback received from the public will be reviewed by the EMA and planning team; documentation of public participation will be maintained by the EMA. The public should have open access to any findings in annual reports, as well as any recommendations for future projects, initiatives, and actions.

1.5.4 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms

Community and economic development in Huron County are handled by a wide array of cooperating entities with a broad reach into the various disciplines, businesses, and agencies in the county.

The Norwalk Economic Development Corporation (NEDC) is a public/private non-profit organization that serves the Norwalk area. NEDC's strategic priorities include supporting industry, advocating for businesses, developing a strong workforce, collaborating with partners across the region, and connecting the business community with resources.

With offices in Norwalk and Willard, the Huron County Development Corporation (HCDC) is a public/private non-profit that is supported financially by the Huron County Commissioners and serves nine of the ten municipalities and nineteen townships. HCDC serves as the Community Improvement Corporation for all of Huron County except New London, which has created the New London Community Improvement Council. The Willard Area Economic Development Corporation, Team NEO of Jobs Ohio, and Chambers of Commerce in Norwalk and Willard join the development efforts as community partners with HCDC.

The Huron County EMA supports these development activities through participation in committees and workgroups. The EMA Director provides input in developing policies and procedures; creating and revising land use plans, economic development strategies, code enforcement policies and methods; and recruiting and retaining business across the county.

Jurisdictions across the county also participate and support the consideration of hazards and hazard mitigation as community development is planned, executed, and evaluated.

Huron County community development officials attempt to appropriately locate entities in areas that serve their business needs, do not contribute to escalating casualty and loss due to storms and other disasters, and emphasize principles of wise land use. They concentrate on the preservation of agricultural land, protection of natural habitat, and proper use of resources and infrastructure.

Huron County is zoned. Zoning is intended to guide appropriate location of commercial, agricultural, and residential entities across the county. A significant consideration in zoning approval is the impact of the potential business on local infrastructure, such as utilities, resources and roads. HCEDC encourages, by policy, consistency in zoning regulations between municipalities and townships, especially adjacent jurisdictions. They also advocate for consistency in all other regulation such as building codes, fire codes, and permit process.

Commercial development and electrical code compliance are fully regulated as part of Ohio law and floodplain regulations are strictly enforced. The State of Ohio issues plumbing permits. The Richland County Building Inspection Department, by contract with Huron County, reviews, approves, and inspects all other commercial construction and improvements. The county's 2017 Land Use Plan identifies consideration of providing these inspection and enforcement services locally as a priority. While outsourcing this service has worked well in the past, the county may be able to improve this service if an inspection department was provided directly by Huron County. The plan recommended development of a task force to consider this option.

Both the current 2017 Updated Huron County Land Use Plan and its predecessor, the 2007 Huron County Land Use Plan, were developed through a wide scope of involvement across the county. All municipalities and townships participated. The Huron County EMA Director was part of the committee in both planning cycles, and brought disaster and emergency management issues, including hazard mitigation, to the table.

The 2017 Land Use Plan recognizes that poorly drained soils in Huron County impact development and that mitigation measure are necessary to facilitate development in some areas. The plan encourages aggressive ditch maintenance programs to help with drainage and for agricultural use of field tile, conservation practices, and buffer zones along riparian corridors.

Huron County has utilized EPA 319 funds to support best management practices like septic upgraded, chemical mixing pads, and livestock exclusion from waterways through fencing and buffer strips. They have used the Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to cost share grass filter strips, wetland restoration, field wind breaks, riparian buffers, and tree planting. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program has provided for voluntary conservation through financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices

approved by the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Huron County's community growth has been, by plan, slow and consistent. Over the years, large businesses like Walmart and other retailers, as well as manufacturing like Borgers International have located in Huron County through guided development and compliance with all development and construction standards as a way to execute principles of wise development. Other industries, such as New Horizons Baking Company, Norwalk Custom Furniture, and Fisher Titus Medical Center, have expanded with guidance and cooperation from local development officials. By providing this guidance and monitoring, growth has not worsened the impact of hazards or created new hazards due to unchecked growth. Community growth has provided additional resources, opportunities for employment, and economic advantages to the county without a negative impact.

Huron County's community growth is a widespread and shared responsibility. While the HCEDC and others take the lead in recruiting and developing new businesses, all county departments, jurisdictions, and businesses play a role in guiding that development. The county is large enough to have ample resources and expertise to succeed, but small enough that people and departments know one another, work together, and share both challenges and success.

The EMA Director monitors development through the agency's role in the development councils and through continual communication with jurisdiction officials, businesses and industries, and county officials. The Director works with fire departments that provide fire inspections, building officials who inspect construction, and business owners who execute growth initiatives. The Director has, for many years, been the primary voice of mitigation in county leadership roles, supported and enhanced by the Huron County Commissioners and other elected officials.

The wide array of individuals involved in community development allows for a broad perspective in the development community in Huron County. It facilitates wise development, measured growth, and true improvement without the addition of unanticipated hazard vulnerability.

1.5.5 Documentation of Plan Maintenance

The EMA will be responsible for maintaining documentation of all plan maintenance activities. This documentation should include attendance records for annual review meetings and events, contact lists of stakeholders invited to complete digital surveys, meeting notes and summaries, and recommendations from stakeholders for changes, additions, or deletions to the plan. Results from surveys and questionnaires, annual jurisdiction reports, and comments submitted by the public should also be maintained. All reports, documents, and files can be saved digitally so they are more accessible and less cumbersome to maintain. These records should be part of the data shared with the author of the next update to the mitigation plan.

1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle

The newly approved Huron County Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2024. With annual plan maintenance activities, the county should be positioned to submit an updated plan before the identified expiration date. To ensure the appropriate timeline is met, formal efforts to update the plan will begin in mid-2022. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.