

1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Lorain County EMA utilized a comprehensive, whole community planning process to develop the 2022 Lorain County Hazard Mitigation Plan. This section describes the planning process and stakeholders involved in that process.

1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Lorain County's mitigation planning process began in February 2021 and concluding with the submission of a revised plan for state review and federal approval in April 2022. The plan development process included three phases: pre-update planning, planning team meetings, and final plan review.

1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning

Lorain County's most recent mitigation plan was approved on May 21, 2015, and expired May 21, 2020. Due to personnel changes, grant cycles, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the EMA was not able to begin work to update the plan until early 2021. Upon receipt of a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program award through the Ohio EMA, the Lorain County EMA requested quotes from consultants and selected a Resource Solutions Associates LLC to develop the updated plan in early 2021.

Upon completion of all necessary grant agreements, contracts, and administrative requirements, the EMA Director and Consultant met to develop a project timeline, review planning requirements, and identify local references and resources to be inclusion in the plan. The Consultant and EMA Director developed an initial contact list for the mitigation planning team that included jurisdiction officials and community leaders from across the county as well as EMA Directors from adjacent counties.

1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings

The planning team worked collaboratively throughout the process to provide feedback and input into the updated plan. Partners from across the county and all jurisdictions participated in the process. The complete planning team list is included in Appendix A: Mitigation Planning Team.

Hazard and Risk Identification Survey

The planning team's initial work focused on completion of a hazard identification and risk assessment survey. The survey was provided to all planning team members by email and was posted on the consultant's website. The survey gathered feedback from the community about the thirteen hazards addressed in the plan, including frequency, response duration, speed of onset, magnitude, business impact, human impact, and property impact. Participants also identified hazards that, from their perspective, had improved or worsened over the last five years and had the greatest impact on their jurisdiction. A copy of the survey instrument used to collect this data is included in Appendix C: Hazard Assessment Survey Tool.

Planning Team Work Sessions

After completing the hazard identification and risk assessment survey, jurisdictions and planning team members were invited to participate in planning team work sessions. These meetings included representatives from jurisdictions and organizations across the county. These individuals gathered with the purpose of discussing recent hazard events and the impact on the community, changes to the community since the 2015 mitigation plan was developed, and future development goals and trends that will impact the community in the next five years. Table 1-1 includes a complete list of the work sessions conducted throughout the planning process.

Table 1-1: Planning Team Meetings

Date	Location	Participating Stakeholders
9/15/21	Lorain County EMA (Morning Meeting)	Countywide Meeting
9/15/21	Lorain County EMA (Afternoon Meeting)	Countywide Meeting
9/15/21	Lorain County EMA (Evening Meeting)	Countywide Meeting
11/15/21	Sheffield Lake Meeting	Sheffield Lake
11/15/21	Vermilion Meeting	Vermilion Brownhelm Township
1/6/22	Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District Meeting	
5/5/22	Lorain County EMA	All – countywide meeting

Mitigation Strategy Survey

After participating in the planning team work sessions, planning team members provided additional feedback on the status of the 2015 mitigation strategies. This work was completed through an electronic survey that was customized for each jurisdiction. Respondents assessed each strategy from the previous plan and assigned a status of complete, ongoing, unchanged, or defer. This feedback was combined with the feedback provided in the work sessions to identify new mitigation strategies for the updated plan.

1.1.3 Final Plan Review

After extensive input from the surveys and work sessions, the Consultant developed a draft plan. Jurisdictions and stakeholders were given electronic access to the draft plan sections through the Consultant’s website. The planning team was asked to provide feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the information and identify any additional mitigation strategies that may be necessary. The planning team could provide feedback to the Consultant directly by email, through an electronic form on the website, or through the EMA Director. These chances were incorporated into the plan prior to the public review period.

Following the planning team’s review, a two-week public review period was conducted from May 5, 2022 through May 20, 2022. During this time, the plan was available electronically on the Consultant’s website. A print copy was also available at the Lorain County EMA for anyone with limited computer access. A public review forum was held on May 5, 2022, to provide

stakeholders and the community with an opportunity to review and discuss the plan in person with the Consultant and EMA Director. Notification of this plan review forum was made through letters to jurisdictions, news releases, and posts on the EMA's official social media accounts.

The EMA Director and Consultant reviewed all comments and questions submitted by stakeholders and the public. Appropriate revisions were incorporated into the plan documents. After final revisions were completed, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch for state review. Upon state and federal approval, the formal plan adoption process began, as explained in section 4.0 of this plan.

1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

To encourage countywide participation in the mitigation plan, a broad group of stakeholders were invited to participate in the planning process. Invitations were extended to more than 130 individuals representing partners across Lorain County, including:

- Incorporated jurisdictions (county, city, village officials)
- Township representatives (trustees, fiscal officers)
- Specialized disciplines, including floodplain management, fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, education, nonprofits, and social service agencies
- Elected and appointed officials, including the county commissioners, auditor, treasurer, engineer, and regional planning
- Economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and tourism bureaus
- Emergency management officials from adjacent counties (Erie, Huron, Ashland, Medina, and Cuyahoga)
- 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

During the planning process, more than 50 people contributed to the planning process by attending work sessions and completing surveys. A complete list of participating stakeholders is provided in Appendix A: Mitigation Planning Team. This participation occurred over the phases of plan development described previously in the plan.

When scheduling work sessions, the EMA considered the scheduling needs of stakeholders. Many sessions were held at the Lorain County EMA office because that location is centralized in the county and convenient to most participants. Some sessions were conducted in specific jurisdictions to facilitate participation by multiple individuals from that jurisdiction. Evening and virtual meetings were also offered to participants because the county has a number of officials that fill their role in a part-time or volunteer capacity.

1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation

All incorporated jurisdictions in Lorain County elected to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. The officials identified in Table 1-2 served as the primary representative and point of contact for their jurisdiction.

Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdictions and Primary Representatives

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
COUNTY		
Lorain County	EMA Director	Jessica Fetter
Lorain County	County Administrator	Rob Weber
MUNICIPALITIES		
Amherst	Mayor	Mark Costilow
Avon	Mayor	Bryan Jensen
Avon Lake	Mayor	Gregory Zilka
Elyria	Mayor	Kevin Brubaker
Grafton	Mayor	David Divencenzo
Kipton	Mayor	Robert Meilander
LaGrange	Mayor	Kim Strauss
North Ridgeville	Mayor	Kevin Corcoran
Oberlin	City Manager	Rob Hillard
Rochester	Mayor	Cindy Kirpley
Sheffield	Mayor	John Hunter
Sheffield Lake	Mayor	Dennis Bring
South Amherst	Mayor	David Leshinski
Vermilion	Mayor	Jim Forthofer
Wellington	Mayor	Hans Schneider

1.2.2 Public Participation

In addition to jurisdiction representatives and community partners, the public was also included in the mitigation planning process. All work sessions were open to the public and surveys were posted publicly, allowing anyone in the community to provide feedback. Planning team members and jurisdiction officials were also encouraged to share mitigation information with their community and promote activities on their websites and social media accounts.

Upon completion of the plan, a public review period was held from May 5 – 20, 2022. The plan was posted on the Consultant’s website during this period and anyone from the community was able to submit comments or questions, either directly by email or through an electronic form on the website. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Lorain County EMA for anyone without computer access. The public was notified of this review through news releases, letters to jurisdictions, and posts on official social media accounts. All notifications include a link to view the plan online, instructions for submitting feedback, and contact information for the EMA.

Within the public review period, a countywide plan review forum was held on May 5, 2022. This forum was open to the entire planning team and any member of the public that wished to attend. The forum's purpose was to provide an in-person opportunity to review the plan, ask questions, and discuss multi-jurisdictional implementation of the mitigation strategies.

All comments from the public review period and forum were reviewed by the EMA Director and Consultant. Appropriate revisions were incorporated into the plan. After final revisions, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA for state review and FEMA for federal approval. Following federal approval, the formal adoption process began, as detailed in section 4.0 Plan Adoption.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Many information sources were utilized as this plan was developed. Research included formal plans, document, and databases as well as extensive discussions with stakeholders, subject matter experts, and community leaders to obtain information specific to Lorain County. The county profile is based on demographic data and local information provided by community partners. Hazard definitions and history information were taken from the National Weather Service; hazard histories are current through 2021, the most recent data available. The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis are based on multiple information sources, including HAZUS reports, Ohio EMA information, and FEMA data. The table below identifies the references, reports, and studies utilized in plan development.

Table 1-3: Studies, Reports, and References

Document	Author/Agency	Date
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2022
HAZUS Earthquake and Flood data	Ohio EMA	2012
Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019
Lorain County Profile	Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research	2020
Storm Events Database	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2021
US Census	US Census Bureau	2020
The National Risk Index	FEMA	2020
FEMA Repetitive and Severe Repetitive Loss Data	FEMA	2022
Lorain County Metroparks 10-year plan	Lorain County Metroparks	2014
Lorain County Metroparks Annual Report	Lorain County Metroparks	2019
Flood Insurance Study for Lorain County, Ohio	FEMA	2021
NOAA Storm Database for Lorain County OH	NOAA	2022
Black River Discovery Report	Ohio EPA	2008
Black River Watershed Action Plan	Lorain County Community Development	2011
Lorain County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	Lorain County Commissioners	2013
Great Lakes Coastal Flood Study	FEMA	2013

Lorain County HAZUS Run – Earthquake	Ohio EMA	2013
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1.4 PLAN MAINTENANCE

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan and encourages the inclusion of hazard mitigation considerations into ongoing community development activities, engages stakeholders in issues related to disaster risk reduction on a regular basis, and streamlines the mitigation plan update process. The Lorain County EMA will work to conduct plan maintenance activities following adoption of this plan.

1.4.1 Annual Plan Maintenance Activities

Upon approval of this plan, Lorain County will transition into plan maintenance. The 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. Because participation in meetings can be a challenge, the EMA will identify the method to conduct this review based on stakeholder needs. Methods can include, but are not limited to, traditional meetings, digital surveys, and virtual meetings. The intent of annual plan maintenance is to track progress on mitigation goals and strategies and document changes in hazards and risks. The specific method used to collect this information is less important than the actual collection of feedback. If the county is impacted by an actual disaster incident, the EMA will also consider a post-incident mitigation meeting to capture any specific mitigation needs and document changes for the next plan update. The EMA Director will also review the hazard identification and risk assessment and note necessary changes for the next plan update.

1.4.2 Community Participation

In Lorain County, the EMA is responsible for coordinating mitigation plan maintenance but stakeholder and community participation are critical. The EMA will continue reaching out to a broad group of community partners and encouraging their participation in ongoing mitigation activities.

To encourage participation from the community, all mitigation review meetings and activities will be open to the public. These events will be promoted through news releases, websites, social media posts, and other appropriate communication methods. Any digital surveys or data collection tools will be made available to the community. Feedback received from all participants will be reviewed by the EMA Director and documentation maintained.

1.4.3 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms

Across the county, multiple organizations work together to promote community and economic development. These agencies will also support and encourage implementation of the identified hazard mitigation strategies.

The Lorain County Community Development department provides planning services, zoning consultation, and floodplain management for the county. The commission collaborates with townships and municipalities across Lorain County to update and maintain zoning codes and

other regulations. The planning commission is also charged with updating and maintaining the county's comprehensive plan.

The Lorain County Community Development department is the primary agency that works to develop businesses in the county through recruitment and placement of new companies and expansion of existing businesses. Along with the Chamber of Commerce and government officials, they work to foster business growth and development in the county. Lorain County Community Development is involved with emergency housing programs, the Brownfield Coalition, CDBG/CHIP contractor options, and participates in the Black River Watershed coalition. They are the primary agency working with community development, economic development and business growth.

From a regulatory aspect, the Community Development department provides the floodplain manager, floodplain standards, and other floodplain activities for the county. They work with subdivisions for subdivision standards and regulations, zoning inspectors for zoning rules, and building inspectors for commercial and residential development.

The County Port Authority and the Stormwater Management District work with the Community Development department on new development, construction projects, renovations and refurbishments, and other business projects. They link to the Small Business Administration and other lenders and financial institutions as well as working with various loan programs, tax abatement programs and workforce development.

Several of the municipalities have development departments. The Lorain Port and Finance Authority, the City of Elyria, the City of Oberlin, the City of Avon Lake, the City of Lorain, the City of Avon, the City of North Ridgeville, the Village of Grafton, and other municipalities participate in development activities and projects.

The EMA Director works with these organizations and officials across the county to assess disaster risk, prepare for all types of hazards, and implement and monitor hazard mitigation actions.

1.4.4 Documentation of Plan Maintenance

The EMA will maintain documentation of all plan maintenance activities. This documentation will include attendance records, contact information for stakeholders and planning team members, surveys, progress reports, and disaster damage information submitted by jurisdictions and community partners. This information will be shared with the planning team during the next plan update process.

1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle

The 2022 Lorain County Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2027. With ongoing plan maintenance activities, the county will 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 no later than 2026. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.