



FEMA

Building Community Resilience by Integrating Hazard Mitigation

The Role of Local Leadership

How Can Local Leaders Promote the Integration of Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning?

Local community leaders and decision makers play an important role in setting priorities, providing overarching policy direction, and bringing stakeholders together. Their visibility can be used to spearhead initiatives that promote the importance of integrating hazard mitigation to achieve overall community safety and resilience. In addition, they have the ability to communicate with a broad base of constituents and partners. These qualities are invaluable for the success of an integrated, interdepartmental, multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation strategy. Here are some ways to promote integrated hazard mitigation solutions:

- **Frame the issue.** On its own, integrating hazard mitigation and safe growth policies can seem like an obscure topic to decision makers and the general public. Frame the issue in terms that resonate with the community, such as economic development, environmental protection, or providing essential public services. Use these issues to highlight the importance of hazard mitigation in supporting these community values.
- **Make safety and resilience a priority.** Ensure that public safety and community resilience are considered in all decisions. When deliberating or voting on an issue, providing policy direction, or setting budgets, ask how that decision affects safety and resilience, and ask which hazard mitigation practices may strengthen the decision.
- **Build partnerships.** Bring stakeholders to the planning table by fostering partnerships among local departments, between agencies, and between communities. Include representatives of interest groups such as environmental organizations, business associations, or professional associations. Make use of technical experts—this helps to provide a more robust knowledge pool for developing ways to integrate hazard mitigation. Invite civic organizations and the general public to participate and provide input.
- **Get the message out.** Use the visibility of a local leader as a platform to champion, or raise awareness on, the importance of hazard mitigation and community resilience. Quickly highlight successful actions and return on investment to promote other actions. Be repetitive and consistent with the message through multiple channels of communication.



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Local leaders promote integration of hazard mitigation within the community by framing the issue, making it a priority, building partnerships, and conveying the message. Conveying the message includes demonstrating and celebrating success.

Responsibility for promoting community safety and resilience does not lie with a single person or department. Hazards often cross jurisdictional boundaries, requiring communication and partnerships among neighboring communities and various organizations that can support integration efforts.

What Community Tools Support Community Resilience?

Building or enhancing community resilience does not need to mean expensive structural protection measures. Decisions that are made relating to land use, environmental protection, economic development, capital improvements, government operations, and budgets all have a role to play in mitigating hazard risks. The most effective way to promote resilience at the community level is to integrate the consideration of risk, and ways to reduce or eliminate risk, into all decisions.

Examples of integrated hazard mitigation solutions include:

- Establishing goals, policies, and objectives that are linked to risk reduction and resiliency in the comprehensive, general, or other community plans;
- Incorporating hazard mitigation standards in permit reviews;
- Using tax increment financing, transportation improvement financing, or other public funding mechanisms to help pay for hazard mitigation measures;
- Using capital improvement programs to fund hazard mitigation measures;
- Using infrastructure improvements to guide growth away from known hazard areas;
- Using zoning and other land use controls to prohibit or discourage hazardous development patterns;
- Preserving natural areas or open space as buffers against known hazards, such as wildfire breaks;
- Preserving or restoring natural functions that minimize hazard impacts, such as wetland restoration;
- Incorporating structural retrofits or relocation of existing buildings or infrastructure during the post-disaster redevelopment process; and
- Incorporating the awareness of hazard risks and hazard mitigation into public outreach practices.

Why is Hazard Mitigation Important?

Hazard mitigation has value on a number of levels. Mitigation creates safer communities by reducing loss of life and damage to property. Mitigation also enables individuals and communities to recover more quickly from disasters. And, mitigation lessens the financial impact of disasters on individuals and all levels of government.



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For More Information

Refer to FEMA's integration guidance document, *Integrating Hazard Mitigation Into Local Planning*, available at www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources