



The New Grand Forks: Surviving and Building Better

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Grand Forks County, North Dakota

Grand Forks, ND - In April 1997 the Red River overflowed its banks, flooding 8,600 homes in Grand Forks, North Dakota. While the floodwaters rose, a fire broke out in the downtown business district. Between the flood and the fire, all 315 businesses were affected. The successful rebuilding of the city resulted from partnerships among residents, local businesses and local, state and federal governments. The city also established a commitment to reducing future losses through mitigation projects.



City leaders set the tone for rebuilding almost immediately. After the water receded, they enforced local regulations requiring rebuilding with special flood protection measures and by implementing several other mitigation projects.

The city's water treatment plant was rebuilt with measures to elevate sensitive equipment, creating a flood emergency management plan, prohibiting further construction along the Red River and with the addition of hollow core metal shields to protect windows and doors. These measures will ensure continued operation of the plant through floods, blizzards and severe storms.

A new elementary school was constructed above the base-flood elevation, replacing two substantially damaged schools.

A buyout program was funded through FEMA's hazard mitigation grants, by the state, city and under HUD's Community Development Block Program. Nearly 600 residential and 40 commercial properties in the floodplain were voluntarily sold to the city through a buyout program. Because of the buyout, home and business owners have moved out of harm's way to safer areas. The flood-ravaged buildings also have been demolished and the resulting green space will remain open and undeveloped forever.

Through the first three years of recovery, the new disaster-resistance philosophy has taken hold.

"Rebuilding with disaster-resistance measures is the best advice we've ever been given and I have the greatest trust that they will work," said Pat Owens, former Mayor of Grand Forks during the 1997 flooding and recovery.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VIII**

State: **North Dakota**

County: **Grand Forks County**

City/Community: **Grand Forks**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Building Codes; Elevation, Structural**
Activity/Project Start Date: **04/1997**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Local Sources; State sources; Other Federal Agencies (OFA)**
Funding Recipient: **Property Owner - Residential**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Yes**
Federal Disaster #: **1174 , 04/07/1997**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/fargoflood/>

Main Points

- The successful rebuilding of the city resulted from partnerships among residents, local businesses and local, state and federal governments.
- The city's water treatment plant was rebuilt with measures to elevate sensitive equipment, creating a flood emergency management plan, prohibiting further construction along the Red River, and with the addition of hollow core metal shields to protect windows and doors.
- Through the first three years of recovery, the new disaster-resistance philosophy has taken hold.