Hazard Planning Successfully Shapes Growing Communities

State-wide, Florida

Belle Glade, FL — Florida recorded four of the top five costliest American hurricanes of the century after Hurricanes Andrew, Charley, Ivan and Wilma struck the peninsula. Over the years the state took action to better protect its residents and establish innovative programs to help communities and businesses reduce their risk of damage during future disasters. The programs included the development of an enhanced, unified, statewide building code and an emphasis on integrating community development and disaster plans on the local level to elevate the priority of disaster resistance measures in the planning and budgeting process.

The state offered statewide workshops to show how effective hazard planning at the local level can reduce a community's vulnerability. Florida's four planning mechanisms address reducing hazard vulnerability: The Comprehensive Plan, The Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS), The Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan and the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Blending these plans encourages communities to make the right choices as they develop policies, ordinances and plans to create sustainable growth scenarios.

A key part of the effort begins with each government's Local Comprehensive Plan, a guide for land development and capital facilities planning. The plan establishes long-range policy for day-to-day land-use decisions and provides guidance about potential hazards. Using the guidance, communities can direct residential and commercial growth to areas of reduced risk. For example, one Florida community supported locating a development concentrating on water recreation to an area of frequent flooding, thereby reducing residential damage potential.

Federal and state laws require communities to effectively implement a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) as another way to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Florida counties invited representatives from public and private entities within each community to develop a county-wide LMS and to define projects that reduce an area's disaster risks. Florida counties and municipalities must adopt and file a FEMA-approved LMS with the state to be eligible for certain state and federal funding sources.

Two additional disaster plans identify hazard risks and describe how a community responds during and after a disaster. The Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan concentrates on evacuation strategies, sheltering disaster victims and other ways to protect the health and safety of the public. The Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan identifies what should happen during the process of recovery and reconstruction.

The state-funded pilot project also recognized hazards in potential growth and redevelopment areas. Communities could avoid building homes and businesses in risk-prone areas to reduce future damage to property and public facilities. For example, local leaders could change the land-use designation of a flood-prone area from high-density residential/commercial to recreational and open space.

Quick Facts

Sector:
Public

Cost:
$25,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:
Mitigation Planning/Disaster Resistant Universities

Primary Funding:
State sources