



# FEMA

## Multiple Mitigation Measures Give Darlington an Elevating Experience

**Darlington, WI** - Located in the southwestern corner of Wisconsin, this rural city (population of 2,398) was founded beside the Pecatonica River and officially given the name of Darlington in 1869. During the past 172 years, this beautiful community has been at odds with the Pecatonica River, a medium-sized body of water that nearly encircles the city with coils of brownish water during floods. Normally, the river gently flows southward, then bends east until it bends abruptly north, east, south and east again, forming a tight horseshoe. It is at this horseshoe bend where trouble bubbles over and swamps Darlington when the river rises.

Flooding was deteriorating structures and drastically reducing property values all over town. The losses continued to grow with every clean-up and repair. The buildup of mold and mildew in downtown structures was destroying Darlington's business infrastructure. The frequency of flooding in Darlington was approximately once every 20 to 21 years, but since 1950, floods began occurring more often.

During the onslaught of floods, the city's mayor, Bev Anderson, with help and advice from State and Federal officials, and other community leaders began developing a come-back strategy by developing a flood mitigation plan. They used a multi-objective approach to understanding their watershed problems: consider all flooding solutions, identify community concerns, obtain expert advice, and built strong partnerships. Mitigation became the one word that could offer hope for everyone involved.

In the end, Darlington's Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan became the first in the State of Wisconsin to be approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The plan called for business property owners to cover the costs of rehabilitation and historic preservation of their buildings; private homeowners encouraged to purchase flood insurance if they did not already have policies; and historic structures brought into conformance with current building codes and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Meeting the ADA requirements called for constructing a shared, concrete, handicap-access ramp constructed in the rear of the downtown buildings. The ramp not only would serve several buildings, it also would act as a flood barrier.

Among the mitigation plan's projects involved mitigating the city's utilities, constructing flood shields, elevating buildings, and relocating buildings. Darlington's wastewater treatment facility was relocated away from the flood zone. All major utilities such as gas and electric in the flood zone were raised as much as eight feet off the ground. Anything that had previously been covered by floods would now be high and dry.



Lafayette County,  
Wisconsin



### Quick Facts

- Year:  
**1992**
- Sector:  
**Public/Private Partnership**
- Cost:  
**\$2,300,000.00 (Actual)**
- Primary Activity/Project:  
**Acquisition/Buyouts**
- Primary Funding:  
**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**