

# The Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

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**Preliminary Steps:** Obtain public involvement  
Prepare the community for planning

**Step 1:** Identify hazards and risks

Includes four sub-steps:

- a. The Community Profile
- b. Hazard Identification
- c. Risk Assessment
- d. Vulnerability Assessment

**Step 2:** Define goals and objectives

**Step 3:** Identify alternatives for solving problems

**Step 4:** Select evaluation criteria

**Step 5:** Select feasible mitigation strategies

**Step 6:** Prepare a draft plan

**Step 7:** Prepare final plan

**Step 8:** Implement plan

**Step 9:** Monitor and periodically revise plan

# Obtaining Public Involvement

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Since hazards may affect the entire community, it pays to get as many citizens as possible involved in identifying them, and in planning, designing and implementing hazard mitigation strategies. Public involvement builds support and ensures a strong base for future mitigation activities. The value of public involvement lies in sharing responsibility with those who will strongly influence the success or failure of the mitigation effort. Involving a broad cross-section of interested individuals and organizations is a way of collecting good ideas and suggestions and ensuring that the community will view hazard mitigation as relevant to their needs.

Furthermore, strength in numbers will increase the chances for lasting accomplishments. It is also helpful to coordinate with adjacent communities since hazards do not neatly follow jurisdictional or funding lines. The involvement of local business persons may lead to additional funding or assistance that otherwise would not have been available for mitigation projects.

Feedback will be most critical during a community's initial hazard identification, during its vulnerability assessment and identification and evaluation of goals and objectives. Feedback will also be needed when a community reviews its draft plan and monitors the implementation of its final plan. Each of these steps will be detailed in later sections of this workbook, but for now it is important merely to understand that in order to be successful, a good plan will need public involvement during many phases of its development.

## The Need for Public Input and Community Participation

Take some time at the outset to lay out a plan for urging local citizens to participate in the process, and document your actions as you proceed. **According to new federal regulations, your plan will need to include thorough descriptions of how public input was obtained.** To effectively use people's time, skills and available resources in the process, ask these questions:

### **Who is the public?**

Identify the interest groups that should be involved in the mitigation effort. Should Landowners, conservation groups, civic clubs, youth groups and schools be involved? Which governmental or private-sector agencies should be involved? Are there groups outside the community that may have an interest? Once you identify these groups, ask them to help identify others who may not have been included.

### **What do you want from the public?**

Do you need technical expertise or information? Do you need a sense of public opinion, or information about the community's level of hazard risk? Do you need to use experts? Do you need the assistance of volunteers? If so, think about when they are needed, how many will be needed, and for how long?

### **What will you give to the public?**

Will you give them a real voice in developing and implementing the plan? Will they have the power to advise and make suggestions? What responsibilities and duties will you ask them to perform? Will participation be open to all people or will there be criteria to identify the key stakeholders on particular issues?

### **How much do you want to involve the public?**

Are there particular roles for participants, such as advisory, decision-making, review, approval? How much power will these participants have? How much public involvement is right? How will you balance the roles of professionals versus the public?

### **When is public involvement appropriate or most effective?**

At what stages or during what events will public involvement be most effective? Are there any elections, festivals or holidays that tie in with a meeting or coincide with the release of a report?



## Choose Your Techniques

Review the techniques discussed below and decide what combination most appropriately fits your effort and resources. Implement your selected techniques within a well-planned public education and consensus-building strategy to maximize the future accomplishments of your hazard mitigation plan.

### **Advisory Committees:**

This is an excellent way to involve citizens in the mitigation plan development and implementation process. Membership should be broad-based, including persons who are directly affected and those with a more general interest. You can use either an open-ended or a selective appointment process, but do make sure that all meetings are public and well announced.

The primary functions of an advisory committee are:

- To provide direction to professionals by assisting in decision-making.
- To inform the general public about progress being made.
- To lend skills to the planning effort, whether it is technical expertise, political support, financial assistance, mobilization of volunteer efforts, or some other valued resources.

Don't try to avoid controversy when appointing the members. A wide range of interests, expertise and viewpoints is essential for a credible and effective committee. Involve opponents early in the process to address their concerns, demonstrate your good faith, and invite them to be partners rather than opponents. Such things are likely to emerge down the road anyway, and if not anticipated in advance, they may derail important projects or otherwise interfere with plan development and adoption.

### **Meetings:**

Like the colonial town hall meetings from which the ideals of American democracy evolved, meetings will be a rallying point and an important basis for your mitigation planning effort. Meetings are a simple and effective way to get people together and they serve a variety of purposes, including:

- Conveying information
- Reporting results
- Demonstrating causes and views
- Helping people to make decisions
- Sharing and developing ideas
- Identifying, offering, and providing resources and commitment

Meetings take many forms. Public hearings, workshops, forums and committee meetings all have different purposes and formats. Small, informal meetings are good for collecting "qualitative" information such as opinions, attitudes and complaints. A large workshop or nominal group session is useful for identifying specific goals and issues and exploring in depth the possible actions to address them. By developing a simple agenda, with clear goals and objectives, your meeting will be much more fruitful and effective.

### **Surveys:**

Surveys are very effective tools, and the use of questionnaires can be relatively easy and affordable. Not only do you collect valuable information, but you establish rapport and foster involvement among citizens and officials. Surveys can be customized to extract varying levels of data from a varied cross-section of the public: property owners, environmentalists, property rights advocates, and recreation boosters. Best of all, you can reach people who never show up for meetings, but are willing to fill out a form or answer a phone call.

Although in many cases professional researchers are called upon to conduct surveys, it may be helpful to know something of the topic when hiring them, or when designing a survey of your own. Here are some guidelines for designing an effective survey:

- Decide who you are interested in gaining information from. Is it everyone in the community, or just a certain category of person? The category or group of people you are interested in is called a "population." It is not always necessary to survey everyone in a population in order to obtain useful information. A well-selected sample from the population is usually sufficient for accurate and valid feedback.

- A sample should represent the population of interest in a fair and unbiased way. If you can only survey a portion of your target population, decide what factors might interfere with obtaining a representative sample. Might greater participation come from some geographic areas than from others? Will residents of different income levels be ignored or less likely to respond than others? Will some professions or interest groups be represented beyond their actual proportion in the community? These biases should be avoided. In general, bias is reduced as a larger sample from the population is surveyed. If your population is listed somewhere, this list can be used to select a sample from. (Tax rolls, if available, can be a reliable address source for community-wide mail-based surveys.) Most research surveys minimize bias by selecting a large sample at random from the target population. A random sample means that everyone in the population of interest has an equal probability of being selected for inclusion in the study. A computer may be helpful to select your sample in such a way. A large sample usually includes at least 30 to 50 respondents, but preferably has hundreds or even thousands of respondents. For smaller populations, it is more important to survey a significant proportion of the target group than to have a very large sample. For example, if 20 out of 30 business owners on Main Street have been interviewed, the sample may fairly represent the group of interest even though the sample size is small.
- Decide whether the survey will involve a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview, or a questionnaire (which can be sent by mail, e-mail, or posted on the internet). These survey types are listed in general order from the most expensive to the least expensive. They are also listed approximately in order from techniques with the greatest feedback and validity, to those with the least. There are exceptions to these general rules, though. For example, complicated questions are best given out in written form rather than over the telephone.
- Keep the questions clear, understandable and free of jargon or technical language. If possible, build a rapport with respondents but be sure to avoid leading or suggestive language. Each question should ask for information about only a single topic. If you are interested in multiple topics, ask about them in separate questions. Anticipate that some questions may be answered differently depending on the context in which they are asked and answered. The goal of a good survey is to elicit information accurately and honestly from respondents. Questions should be pre-tested to see if they are properly understood by respondents, and can accurately gain the information requested from them. Revise the questions as necessary to maximize validity and response rates.
- Design your survey to suit your information needs. If you need to gather general information and ideas about a new subject, allow respondents to answer the questions in a form they choose (open-ended questions). If you need to reach a conclusion about some information, based on tabulated data, shape the questions into those with a limited number of answers (closed-ended questions). Access to a computer is helpful for tabulating data, and techniques for properly analyzing the data will be needed to reach conclusions on some issues.
- Keep in mind whether survey results need to be kept anonymous or confidential. Confidential information will not be revealed to others. Anonymous information can be revealed so long as there is no way to determine the identity of its source. If appropriate, survey respondents can thus be provided with a summary of survey results, so long as the data is organized in a way that preserves the anonymity of responses. (The questionnaire could also help develop a mailing list for a newsletter or other important communications, or to keep people involved and connected to the project, but this should only be done if they give their permission. Otherwise, participation in the survey will be severely reduced, since many people wish to avoid activities that seem to connect with promotional and marketing agendas.)

### **Personal Interviews:**

In most circumstances, a personal interview is much more effective than a telephone or mail questionnaire. You have the opportunity to ask more intuitive follow-up questions, customize the interview, go into more detail on specific issues, provide more information, and do a more effective job of receiving support for the hazard mitigation plan. The down side is the much greater time and staff needed to do personal interviews. You may want to concentrate mainly on community leaders and other authorities.

### **Mass Media:**

A major mitigation planning effort will be a big story in most communities, so the reporters will likely seek out those involved for facts, quotes and pictures. But it still pays to be proactive when dealing with the media. If not, they may first call when someone complains about a proposed initiative, feeds them false or misleading

information and plants the first seeds of doubt as to the usefulness or wisdom of developing the plan in the first place.

Get your side of the story to the media first: give them the facts, the benefits of doing the plan, a list of prominent supporters, examples of other successful mitigation initiatives and who they can contact for information on them, how it will be financed, who's involved and what their roles are, and a list of reasons why the community should support the effort.

Get acquainted with the "beat" reporters who cover the environment, local government, business/financial news and real estate. Keep in regular contact with them, offering information, story ideas, photo opportunities, etc. Provide news releases for important events and meetings. You may be misquoted or incorrect information may be published. Don't blame the reporter and don't clam up for fear of being misquoted again. Provide the correct information and keep the lines of communication open.

### **Writing a News Release:**

A good news release should give the most important information about your effort in short, readable sentences. Emphasize the benefits to the community and the affected residents. Don't be afraid to advocate for the planning effort or drop names; well-known civic leaders and public officials who support the effort are good bets for getting coverage.

- Keep the release under two pages—one is better.
- Put contact name, address and phone number in the upper left-hand corner.
- Place "For Immediate Release" or date of future release in upper right above headline.
- Type double space with side margins and end each page with a complete paragraph.
- Include your own headline to get the editor's attention and provide your own emphasis.
- Design a release letterhead to attract attention. Your news will have competition on the editor's desk.

### **Newsletters:**

A newsletter can serve many purposes: providing detailed information about the current status of the planning effort, laying out proposals for future initiatives, building support, providing a citizen's forum, providing articles about mitigation efforts in other communities, etc.

Keep technical information and jargon to a minimum; your goal is to build rapport with people in the community. Write in a conversational, informal style, much as you would for a church or civic club newsletter. Use plenty of photos, illustrations, cartoons, white space and other graphic enhancements. Above all, keep it short and to the point; people have many other reading options. Your goal is to get them to spend just a few minutes reading your newsletter.

### Checklist: Public Involvement Techniques

- Meetings
- Advisory committees
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Media coverage
- Public service announcement
- Letters to the editor
- Newsletters
- Posters, flyers, internet sites
- Stationery
- School program

### **Summary**

Computer professionals have a term for the usefulness of poor, incomplete or inaccurate information: "G.I.G.O"--- "Garbage In, Garbage Out." The most well-intentioned community efforts can be needlessly hampered or derailed by the lack of complete, relevant and timely information. Just remember, the type of information you receive from your hazard analysis and mitigation plan is no better than what was put into it. A variety of input from different sources will greatly help to create a living and effective hazard mitigation plan in your community.

# Prepare Your Community for Planning

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Someone must take the initiative and confirm that the appropriate resources for planning are available to the community. This task will probably be initially started by the community's emergency manager (see pages 1 to 3 in this workbook). Assistance for planning should be gained as the emergency manager is able to contact and inform other community members, officials, and organizations about the need for, and benefits of, hazard mitigation planning.

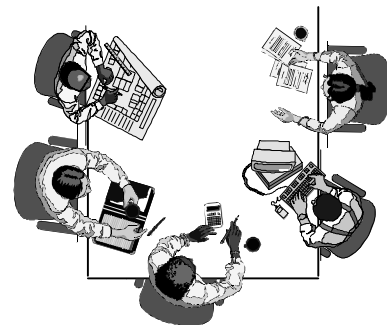
Good timing can significantly enhance community interest in developing a local hazard mitigation plan:

- Recent disasters can increase community awareness and concern for developing a hazard mitigation plan.
- Communities will need to begin working on a plan soon to have the process completed (or well underway) by November 1, 2004. This is the date by which FEMA will begin to require local plans to be in place as a condition for remaining eligible to receive project funds for hazard mitigation projects. (See Appendix C for more information about federal funding sources for hazard mitigation.)
- There may be planning efforts currently underway, or scheduled to begin soon, that hazard mitigation may coordinate neatly with. For example, a community may be developing or updating its master plan at this time, or county drain commissioners may be in the process of developing storm water management plans. Such existing activities can provide a natural source of coordination with, and assistance from, many persons and organizations that will be important for developing a good hazard mitigation plan in your community. Hazard mitigation plans might eventually tie in with other activities such as floodplain mapping.

## Assembling a Team

A team of people should be assembled that will be responsible for researching the community's hazards and developing the plan. A core group of 3 to 5 individuals is recommended, who will consult as necessary with others on specific topics of hazard mitigation. This small, core group will coordinate planning activities, determine a preliminary timeline for plan development, assist in facilitating meetings, and so on. The group should contain persons who are stakeholders in the community (those motivated to get things done because their image, property, etc. will be affected if they don't). The group should also contain at least one professional planner (a person trained in urban and regional planning, real estate development, geography and land use, transportation analysis, economic development, etc.). **Persons should be present that can represent each community**, when multiple communities are participating in the development of a multi-jurisdictional plan.

Other persons should be identified that can assist the core planning group. It will be helpful if people that have the trust and respect of others in the community are involved in the planning. Also, persons who can represent different interests within the community should be sought out and encouraged to get involved. Persons who have authority to represent and make decisions for their organizations are ideal. Persons should also be creative and willing to consider new ideas, since many types of hazard mitigation strategies may not have been implemented in the community before. Specialists on particular topics of interest will be vital for providing hazard analysis information and for selecting effective mitigation strategies. These sorts of persons, if they have the time, desire, and commitment to address issues pertaining to the community's vulnerability to hazards (and especially if they understand local politics and have the ability to communicate effectively) will compose the ideal mitigation planning team.



An informal meeting should first be held to provide information to participants and enlist their participation in the hazard mitigation planning process. The first meeting will create a mood for learning and inspire commitment, rather than immediately trying to problem-solve. Such a meeting can occur in a small conference room, a classroom, or even a private home, but probably should not occur in a large and formal setting. It will be helpful to identify a community leader for the core planning team—someone who can keep momentum going throughout the planning process and generate enthusiasm, but who is also prepared to make decisions and help to resolve controversial issues. A leader who also has access to the community's chief executives is ideal; especially one that has the ability to arrange for a public forum to educate the public and obtain their input.

### **Obtaining Support for Hazard Mitigation Planning**

Members from the core planning team should meet with public officials to inform them about the nature of hazard mitigation planning and its importance. There shouldn't be any arm-twisting—hazard mitigation will typically be accepted based on its inherent benefits and merit, so long as the public safety issues (and other benefits as outlined on page 6) are known. Some knowledge of the costs of hazard mitigation, as well as the benefits, will probably be necessary.



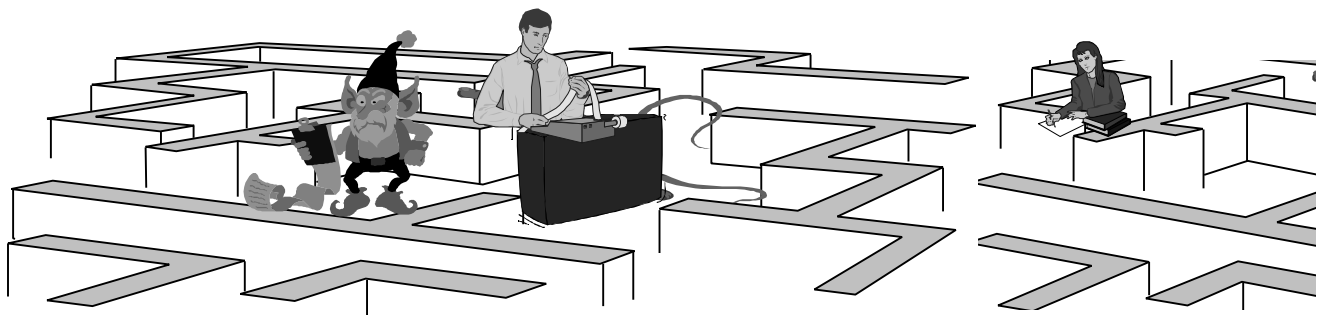
Be sure to include in your discussions a consideration of the true cost of disasters for the community—that it is not just a few houses that bear the only impact, but also potential costs in terms of business closures or interruptions, employment losses, injuries and loss of life, claims of community liability, reduced community "image," declines in tourism, interruption of essential services, impacted quality of life, higher insurance rates, and so on.

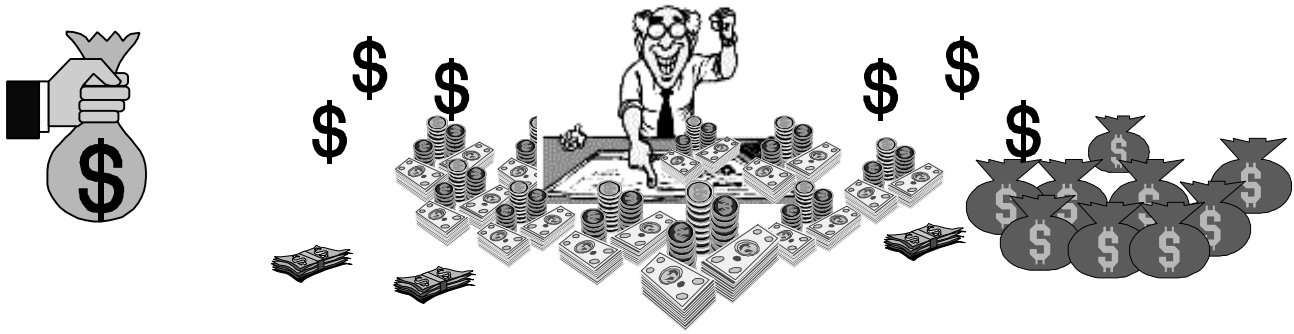
It is also helpful to point out the diverse nature of hazards that a plan can address. Each community will produce a customized plan that focuses on those things that most threaten it. The plan need not be limited to natural hazards, but can and should consider technological and human-related hazards as well. (See the list of identified Michigan hazards on page 4.) Your community may even have unique hazards no one else has thought of, that it will want to address in a hazard mitigation plan.

Official recognition should be gained for the planning team. In the end, the final plan will need to be officially adopted by the community or communities that it represents, so it is important to have awareness of it immediately as the process starts. After some research has been done, input will continue to be obtained from officials and the public. Finally, everything will be pulled together into a final plan that the community will adopt. Adoption of the plan is one of the requirements to receiving state and federal approval for it, which will then allow funding for projects that the plan identifies.

### **Funding for the Hazard Mitigation Plan**

There is an old saying that "It takes money to make money," but in the case of hazard mitigation planning, this is not necessarily true. Although the premise of *some* mitigation projects may be that it takes money to *save* money (in the sense that damages are prevented), even this does not have to be the approach a community takes. Many communities are financially strapped and have difficulties finding any funding with which to support new initiatives and innovative actions—even if it is clear that taking no action may cost the community dearly in the future. Don't despair! Help is available!!





There are federal grant programs available to help communities to develop a plan and then to implement hazard mitigation projects that will eliminate or reduce disaster damages in the future. Funds are available during 2003 from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) that can cover up to 75% of the cost of developing your community's hazard mitigation plan. The remaining 25% can be covered using the value of "in-kind" services (such as labor costs), as long as those services are not also paid for by federal grant funds.

If hazard mitigation is timed to correspond with related community activities, some planning work can probably be performed at little or no additional cost, through coordination with those activities. Once initial meetings are held and awareness of hazard mitigation is created in the community, various sources of assistance may become available. In some cases, part of the 25% "local match" cost-share can be contributed by local businesses, regional planning offices, community foundations, etc. In more than one instance, Michigan universities have offered the assistance of student interns for planning projects, with the value of internship tuition waivers being used to contribute toward the 25% local match requirement. (For more detailed information about federal funding programs for hazard mitigation and local match requirements, please refer to Appendix C in this workbook.)

In most cases, communities find that there are many ways to meet the 25% local match requirement, without contributing hard cash. Many of the state's Regional Planning Offices (see page 10 for a guide) are very knowledgeable about obtaining federal funds and locating sources of local match. The assistance of these offices can often be of great benefit for achieving your community's goals. In many regions throughout the state, local communities have decided to pool their resources and have a central planning office develop at least some parts of their hazard mitigation plans for them. In this way, a significant cost savings can be realized since it is more efficient for a single office to collect, format, and process data for multiple communities than it is for each community to independently do so.

Official recognition should be obtained, authorizing the chosen planners to work on the community's hazard mitigation plan. Such recognition will frequently take the form of a council resolution, a proclamation, a memorandum of agreement (MOA), or a memorandum of understanding (MOU). When planning grant funds are applied for, such official recognition will assure grantors that the grant recipients have been authorized to develop a plan for that community (or communities).

### **The Benefits of a Regional Approach to Hazard Mitigation Planning**

In cases where communities pool funds to authorize a central office to develop customized plans for their areas, such memoranda (MOAs or MOUs) become even more important—especially in cases where one community acts as a "lead agency" to receive and administer grant funds on behalf of planning projects for all the communities. The benefits of such a regional approach usually make such a coordinated effort worthwhile, for not only are there more resources available for planning, and an efficiency that lowers each community's costs, but such an approach to planning is also ideal for addressing hazards that tend to cross jurisdictional boundaries to affect multiple communities.

Some communities may have their own planning resources, and may not wish to have their community's goals and objectives defined by a county or regional office outside their jurisdiction. This concern makes perfect sense in many cases, but the benefits of a regional approach can still be enjoyed for those elements of the plan that do not relate to key community issues. For example, the collection of information about a community's population, or the mapping of its features on a Geographic Information System, does not relinquish any



decision-making authority into the hands of those outside the community. But such tasks may be the most expensive and technically demanding parts of developing the hazard mitigation plan. When applying for grant funds, a community may specify that certain parts of the plan will be completed by one or more outside organizations, while others (such as the writing of policy changes or specific actions to be implemented) may be completed by the county itself. A regional approach to planning is intended only to enhance the quality of each community's plan, and not to displace decision-making authority away from the community itself.

### What is at Stake?

Many officials may wish to understand what kind of project funding that a local hazard mitigation plan will allow their community to tap into. It may be informative to note the amount of funding that the State of Michigan has used to support hazard mitigation activities since such funding was formally begun in 1994. The following table indicates (for each county, and statewide) what the **total mitigation project costs** were, and the **amount of funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**. In most cases, at least a part of the difference was contributed through "in-kind" services rather than hard cash.

### MITIGATION FUNDING MADE AVAILABLE IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1994, BY COUNTY (as of 2002)

COUNTY	PROJECT TOTAL	FEDERAL SHARE	COUNTY	PROJECT TOTAL	FEDERAL SHARE
Alcona	\$240,000	\$180,000	Lake	(3)	(3)
Allegan	\$358,100	\$268,575	Lapeer	\$5,500	\$4,125
Alpena	\$511,500	\$383,625	Leelanau	\$22,500	\$13,875
Antrim	\$447,511	\$286,557	Lenawee	\$281,500	\$211,125
Arenac	\$186,041	\$127,875	Livingston	\$1,146,700	\$824,475
Baraga (1)	\$175,000	\$131,250	Mackinac	\$257,669	\$193,252
Bay	\$2,528,333	\$2,115,000	Macomb (2)	\$2,379,548	\$1,331,339
Cass	\$100,500	\$63,375	Marquette	\$1,868,117	\$1,225,700
Charlevoix	\$325,087	\$233,775	Mason	(3)	(3)
Cheboygan	\$20,000	\$15,000	Midland	\$390,103	\$292,577
Chippewa	\$682,000	\$511,500	Monroe (2)	\$732,283	\$549,212
Crawford	\$2,000	\$1,500	Montmorency	\$243,756	\$182,817
Delta	\$12,578	\$7,500	Muskegon	\$358,790	\$270,623
Dickinson (1)	\$45,000	\$33,750	Oakland (2)	\$4,328,036	\$3,244,392
Eaton	\$300,000	\$225,000	Ogemaw	\$200,000	\$150,000
Grand Traverse	\$77,000	\$57,750	Ontonagon	\$20,600	\$3,000
Genesee	\$7,856,870	\$4,596,053	Osceola	(3)	(3)
Gogebic	\$280,709	\$173,250	Otsego	\$2,105	\$1,575
Gratiot	\$391,370	\$278,250	Ottawa	\$3,240,089	\$2,337,764
Houghton	\$226,361	\$135,192	Saginaw	\$2,743,947	\$1,942,613
Huron	\$565,290	\$376,500	Sanilac (2)	\$5,500	\$4,125
Ingham	\$205,500	\$154,125	St. Clair	\$2,818,000	\$1,997,649
Ionia	\$482,545	\$365,849	St. Joseph	\$388,000	\$290,000
Iosco	\$92,514	\$67,511	Tuscola	\$3,805,601	\$2,854,204
Iron (1)	\$165,713	\$124,285	Van Buren	\$446,500	\$334,875
Isabella	\$81,000	\$60,750	Washtenaw	\$124,815	\$77,625
Jackson	\$1,802,396	\$1,351,797	Wayne	\$3,872,128	\$2,762,561
Kalamazoo	\$86,400	\$64,800	Wexford	\$985,000	\$738,750
Kent	\$3,446,324	\$2,387,643	Statewide (and other)	\$8,020,002	\$6,094,074
Keweenaw	\$150,000	\$112,500	TOTAL in Michigan	\$61,303,598	\$43,365,364

(1) In addition, three counties shared the benefit of a project totaling \$300,000, with \$225,000 coming from FEMA.

(2) In addition, four counties shared the benefit of a project totaling \$201,172, with \$112,500 federal share from FEMA.

(3) Three counties shared the benefits from a project totaling \$80,000 in costs, with \$60,000 of this amount coming from FEMA.

NOTE: Figures represent funding amounts that were available and approved for use within the listed counties. Actual amounts spent may be lower in cases where project costs were lower, or in cases where projects were not completed as authorized. Because this table is based on the most up-to-date information as of the time of writing, in some cases, projects involving these funds are still being arranged for within some of these counties.

Because of the diverse nature of the projects that are compiled into the figures in this single table, the federal share of project costs has sometimes been greater and sometimes less than the standard 75% federal match component. Most counties have received substantially more in funding than it will cost to develop a local hazard mitigation plan, but there are cases where some counties have received no project funds to date. The development of a plan is expected to benefit counties like these by helping them to identify mitigation projects, and allowing them to apply for project funding to implement their identified projects. Although an estimated \$3 million will probably be spent developing hazard mitigation plans throughout Michigan, this is but a fraction of the amount of funding that will be available for mitigation projects that such plans will identify. The reason is simple: mitigation projects save money in the long run by reducing or eliminating harm that arises from known hazards. If your county has not yet received mitigation project funds, the above table shows that many counties just like yours *have* received such funds. Your county should start to develop a plan today!

## **Pulling Together a Planning Team**

The core planning team will generally need to be assisted by various other persons in the community who are interested in achieving hazard mitigation goals. Many stakeholders in the community may have special knowledge or qualifications that could make them appropriate to advise or participate in various aspects of the planning and implementation of local hazard mitigation. In order to determine who might be of assistance to hazard mitigation planning, the following questions might be considered:

- Who are the persons that *represent* those who are most likely to be affected by known hazards?
- Who is likely to mobilize in support of the hazard mitigation process?
- Who is able to contribute financial and technical resources?
- Who are "the voiceless" for whom special efforts may have to be made? (Children? Elderly? The poor?)

It is assumed that the core planning team will include at least one professional planner and the jurisdiction's emergency manager. The following types of organizations may all be useful to represent on your planning team:

- housing associations
- planning commission and/or planning department
- historic preservation groups
- local chapters of the American Red Cross or other relief agency
- county drain commissioners, area stormwater and floodplain managers
- representatives from the public works department, county road commissioners
- emergency medical services (EMS), police chiefs, fire chiefs, sheriff department, etc.
- local emergency planning committee
- researchers and specialists from universities
- an area Chamber of Commerce, at least one elected official

Having an elected official involved can help to provide visibility to hazard mitigation efforts, and an official's political influence will help to validate the hazard mitigation plan. Such an official might also help expedite legislative and budget considerations, proclamations and resolutions, and directives to local personnel and agencies.

Some assistance may also be available from different departments of the state and federal government, such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Weather Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Geological Survey, the Emergency Management Division of the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan State University Extension offices, and so on. Representatives from your community's businesses should also be involved, and perhaps the Chamber of Commerce. FEMA has suggested that the ideal size for the core planning group is about 3-5 persons, and that a broader planning team will have about 15 members to be the most effective. Larger groups can be broken into subcommittees, for greater ease of productivity. Keep the agendas action-oriented. Set timelines when possible.

Meetings should have some documentation, to keep track of ideas, and the reasons behind them. Each person attending planning meetings should have some understanding of what contribution can be made—what role they play, how much time it may require, and what can be expected from the team and planning process as a whole. Meetings should be held frequently enough to hold interest and maintain momentum in the planning process, but should be scheduled flexibly enough to avoid "burn out" of team members. Whenever possible, a consensus-based approach to decision-making should be used, to promote an attitude of respect for differing opinions and ideas. If a majority-rule process is used, some participants may become unhappy with the process, and slow it down or interfere. Not all issues need to be resolved by the first hazard mitigation plan. More controversial or longer-term objectives can be left until the initial plan is revisited, and progress on such matters might later be encouraged by the initial accomplishments of consensus-based hazard mitigation planning.

## **Team and Conflict Management**

Some groups may not always work very smoothly together. Common problems contributing to this include not just a lack of commitment or personality conflicts, but also ill-defined roles, unclear group missions or goals. Having roles and goals clearly defined can help everyone feel more secure and productive in a group. Guard against two main ways that a group can cease working together as a team: (1) an obvious, dramatic conflict, and (2) a quiet disintegration due to inactivity and indifference.