



16. MITIGATION STRATEGY

This chapter presents mitigation strategies for Passaic County to reduce potential vulnerability and losses identified as concerns in the risk assessment portion of this plan. The Steering Committee reviewed the risk assessment and capability assessment to identify and develop these mitigation strategies.

Hazard mitigation reduces the potential impacts of, and costs associated with, emergency and disaster-related events. Mitigation actions address a range of impacts, including impacts on the population, property, the economy, and the environment.

Mitigation actions can include activities such as revisions to land-use planning, training and education, and structural and nonstructural safety measures.

16.1 PAST MITIGATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The County, through previous and ongoing hazard mitigation activities, has demonstrated that it is proactive in protecting its physical assets and citizens against losses from natural hazards. Examples of previous and ongoing actions and projects include the following:

- The County facilitated the development of the original Passaic County HMP. The current planning process represents the regulatory five-year plan update process, which includes the participation of all 16 jurisdictions in the County, along with key County and regional stakeholders.
- All municipalities participating in this HMP update participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which requires the adoption of FEMA floodplain mapping and certain minimum standards for building within the floodplain.
- Reports, plans, and studies relating to or including information on natural hazards or natural hazard policies affecting Passaic County have been reviewed and incorporated into this plan update as appropriate, as discussed in Chapter 2 and the list of references.

16.2 REVIEW AND UPDATE OF MITIGATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section documents describes the process of updating hazard mitigation goals and objectives for reducing or avoiding long-term vulnerabilities to identified hazards. For the purposes of this plan, goals and objectives are defined as follows:

“The hazard mitigation strategy shall include a description of mitigation goals to reduce or avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards.”

44 CFR 201.6(c)(3)(i)

- **Goals** are general guidelines that explain what is to be achieved. They are usually broad, long-term, policy-type statements and represent global visions. Goals help define the benefits that the plan is trying to achieve. The success of the plan, once implemented, should be measured by the degree to which its goals have been met (that is, by the actual benefits in terms of hazard mitigation).
- **Objectives** are short-term aims that form a strategy or course of action to meet a goal. Unlike goals, objectives are stand-alone measurements of the effectiveness of a mitigation action. The objectives also are used to help establish priorities. Broadly defined mitigation objectives were eliminated from the updated strategy unless accompanied by discrete actions.



The Steering Committee reviewed the 2020 goals and objectives and made revisions for the 2025 update based on the following considerations:

- Hazard events and losses since the 2020 plan
- The updated hazard profiles and risk assessment
- The goals and objectives established in the State of New Jersey 2019 HMP
- The Planning Partnership's interests in integrating this plan with other planning mechanisms, including Passaic County and local risk management plans
- Direct input from the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the public on how the County and jurisdictions need to move forward to best manage their hazard risk
- Discussions and research on existing authorities, policies, programs, resources
- Support for mitigation through the protection of natural systems

As a result of this review process, the goals and objectives for the 2025 update were updated to the following:

- Goal 1: Protect Life
 - Objective 1.1: Improve warning and emergency communications systems.
 - Objective 1.2: Reduce the impacts of hazards on people, property, and vulnerable populations.
 - Objective 1.3: Maintain and strengthen local regulatory standards, including full and effective building code enforcement, floodplain management, and other vulnerability-reducing regulations.
- Goal 2: Protect Property
 - Objective 2.1: Protect and increase resilience of critical facilities and lifelines.
 - Objective 2.2: Reduce repetitive and severe repetitive losses.
 - Objective 2.3: Protect environmental resources that serve a natural hazard mitigation function.
 - Objective 2.4: Encourage cost-effective and environmentally sound development and land use.
 - Objective 2.5: Facilitate development and timely submittal of project applications meeting state and federal guidelines for funding for repetitive and severe repetitive loss properties, hardening/retrofitting infrastructure and critical facilities, and the removal of repetitive properties with highest vulnerability rankings.
 - Objective 2.6: Encourage the use of green stormwater infrastructure and programs for retrofitting existing stormwater management systems in urban areas lacking retention or treatment solutions.
 - Objective 2.7: Encourage the establishment of policies to help ensure the prioritization and implementation of mitigation actions and/or projects designed to benefit essential facilities, services, and infrastructure.
- Goal 3: Increase Public Preparedness and Awareness
 - Objective 3.1: Improve education and outreach efforts regarding risk, the potential impacts of hazards, and the identification of specific measures that can be taken to reduce their impact.
 - Objective 3.2: Improve data collection, use, and sharing to reduce the impacts of hazards.
 - Objective 3.3: Provide for user-friendly hazard data accessibility for mitigation and other planning efforts and for private citizens.



- Goal 4: Develop and Maintain an Understanding of Risks from Hazards
 - Objective 4.1: Acquire and maintain detailed critical facilities and lifelines such that these sites can be prioritized and risk-assessed for possible mitigation actions.
 - Objective 4.2: Improve hazard data available to the County and participating communities for use in future planning efforts.
 - Objective 4.3: Incorporate new state and FEMA guidance, rules, and regulations into the HMP.
 - Objective 4.4: Strengthen understanding of, and adaptation to, a changing climate.
- Goal 5: Enhance County and Local Mitigation Capabilities to Reduce Hazard Vulnerabilities
 - Objective 5.1: Increase local government official awareness regarding mitigation planning, project identification and funding opportunities for mitigation.
 - Objective 5.2: Provide government officials and local practitioners with educational opportunities and information regarding best practices for hazard mitigation planning, project identification, and implementation.
 - Objective 5.3: Improve capabilities, coordination, and opportunities at municipal and County levels to plan and implement hazard mitigation projects, programs, and activities.
 - Objective 5.4: Support increased participation in the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System.
 - Objective 5.5: Support increased integration of municipal/County hazard mitigation planning and floodplain management with effective municipal/County zoning regulation, subdivision regulation, and comprehensive planning implementation.
 - Objective 5.6: Strengthen inter-jurisdiction and inter-agency communication, coordination, and partnerships to foster hazard mitigation actions and/or projects.
- Goal 6: Support Continuity of Operations Pre-, During and Post-Hazard Events
 - Objective 6.1: Ensure continuity of operations of essential County and municipal government services.
 - Objective 6.2: Increase resiliency by facilitating rapid disaster recovery.
 - Objective 6.3: Support and encourage the implementation of alternative energy sources.
- Goal 7: Reduce the Risk of Natural Hazards for Socially Vulnerable Populations and Underserved Communities
 - Objective 7.1: Encourage the establishment of policies to help ensure the prioritization and implementation of mitigation actions and/or projects designed to benefit socially vulnerable populations and underserved communities.
 - Objective 7.2: Promote sustainable and equitable land development practices that direct future development away from vulnerable areas.
 - Objective 7.3: Encourage and support multi-jurisdictional mitigation projects that leverage funding and support from multiple levels of government and community organizations.
- Goal 8: Increase Hazard Mitigation Collaboration Within Watersheds and Along Waterways That Are Flood Prone to Ensure Cohesive Mitigation Strategies
 - Objective 8.1: Establish multi-agency partnerships to coordinate hazard mitigation efforts within flood-prone watersheds and waterways.
 - Objective 8.2: Develop and implement integrated flood management plans that align with local, state, and federal guidelines.



- Objective 8.3: Facilitate community engagement and education programs to promote awareness and participation in cohesive flood mitigation strategies.
- Goal 9: Address Long-Term Vulnerabilities from High Hazard Dams
 - Objective 9.1: Ensure that dam infrastructure is maintained.
 - Objective 9.2: Support the identification and access to funding to repair, rehabilitate, replace or remove dams.
 - Objective 9.3: Ensure that emergency action plans are developed and updated.

16.3 MITIGATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATE

16.3.1 Update of Local Jurisdiction Mitigation Strategies

Review of Previous Actions

To evaluate progress on local mitigation actions, each Planning Partner completed a Mitigation Action Plan Review Worksheet that listed all actions identified for their jurisdiction in the prior (2020) plan. The Planning Partners indicated the status of each action (“In Progress,” “Ongoing Capability,” “No Progress,” or “Complete”) and provided comments to quantify the extent of progress and provide reasons for the level of progress. This information is included in the jurisdictional annexes in Volume II.

FEMA defines **Mitigation Actions** as specific actions that help to achieve the mitigation goals and objectives.

Mitigation actions identified as “Complete” have been removed from the Planning Partners’ updated mitigation strategies. Actions identified as “No Progress” or “In Progress” have been carried forward for inclusion in the updated local mitigation strategies or discontinued for specific reasons. Updated action descriptions provide new details on these actions to better define the projects, identify benefits and costs, and improve implementation.

Actions from the previous plan identified as “Ongoing Capability” represent programs that are now fully integrated into the normal operational and administrative framework of the community. These are removed from the updated mitigation strategy (marked as “Discontinued”) and identified in the capabilities assessment of each annex.

Identifying New Actions

At the kickoff and during subsequent local level planning meetings, all participating jurisdictions were further surveyed to identify completed mitigation actions, in progress actions, or ongoing capabilities, as well as potential new actions. Communities also were made aware of potential new mitigation actions as such actions became evident during the plan update process (e.g., through the capability assessment, risk assessment, or the public and stakeholder outreach process).

Developing the Overall Strategy

Beginning in February 2024, members of the Steering Committee and contract consultants worked directly with each jurisdiction (by phone, email, or virtual meetings) to update their annex with mitigation strategies that focus on well-defined, implementable projects that meet the definition or characteristics of mitigation. Mitigation actions were selected with a careful consideration of benefits (risk reduction, losses avoided), costs, and possible funding sources (including mitigation grant programs).



Three annex support meetings were held for Planning Partners to assist in the development of additional actions, foster collaboration between neighboring jurisdictions for mitigation actions, discuss actions that involve cooperation between the County and jurisdictions, and identify steps needed to complete the jurisdictional annexes.

Addressing Known Vulnerabilities

To help support the selection of an appropriate risk-based mitigation strategy, each annex includes a summary of hazard vulnerabilities. These were identified during the plan update process by Planning Partner representatives, through review of available plans and reports, or through the hazard profiling and risk assessment process.

A mitigation strategy workshop was conducted on November 14, 2024, for all participating jurisdictions to support the development of focused problem statements based on the impacts of natural hazards in the County and their communities. These problem statements provide a detailed description of a problem area, including its impacts on the jurisdiction; past damage; loss of service; etc. An effort was made to include the street address of the problem location, adjacent streets, water bodies, and well-known structures as well as a brief description of existing conditions (topography, terrain, hydrology) of the site. These problem statements form a bridge between the hazard risk assessment, which quantifies impacts on each community, and the development of actionable mitigation strategies.

Incorporating a Range of Action Types

Concerted efforts were made to ensure that Planning Partners develop updated mitigation strategies that cover the range of mitigation action types described in recent FEMA planning guidance (FEMA “Local Mitigation Planning Handbook” May 2023):

- **Local Plans and Regulations**—These actions include government authorities, policies or codes that influence the way land and buildings are developed and built.
- **Structure and Infrastructure Project**—These actions involve modifying existing structures and infrastructure to protect them from a hazard or remove them from a hazard area. This could apply to public or private structures as well as community lifelines and other critical facilities. This type of action also involves projects to construct structures to reduce the impact of hazards.
- **Natural Systems Protection**—These are actions that minimize damage and losses to natural systems and preserve or restore their functions.
- **Education and Awareness Programs**—These are actions to inform and educate citizens, elected officials, and property owners about hazards and potential ways to mitigate them. These actions may also include participation in national programs, such as the National Flood Insurance Program, Community Rating System, StormReady (NOAA), and Firewise (NFPA) Communities.

Efforts were also made to develop mitigation strategies that cover the range of mitigation action types described in recent CRS guidance (FEMA 2018):

- **Preventive Measures**—Government, administrative or regulatory actions, or processes that influence the way land and buildings are developed and built. Examples include planning and zoning, floodplain local laws, capital improvement programs, open space preservation, and storm water management regulations.
- **Property Protection**—These actions include public activities to reduce hazard losses or actions that involve (1) modification of existing buildings or structures to protect them from a hazard or (2) removal of



the structures from the hazard area. Examples include acquisition, elevation, relocation, structural retrofits, storm shutters, and shatter-resistant glass.

- **Public Information**—Actions to inform and educate citizens, elected officials, and property owners about hazards and potential ways to mitigate them. Such actions include outreach projects, real estate disclosure, hazard information centers, and educational programs for school-age children and adults.
- **Natural Resource Protection**—Actions that minimize hazard loss and also preserve or restore the functions of natural systems. These actions include sediment and erosion control, stream corridor restoration, watershed management, forest and vegetation management, and wetland restoration and preservation.
- **Structural Flood Control Projects**—Actions that involve the construction of structures to reduce the impact of a hazard. Such structures include dams, setback levees, floodwalls, retaining walls, and safe rooms.
- **Emergency Services**—Actions that protect people and property during and immediately following a disaster or hazard event. Services include warning systems, emergency response services, and the protection of essential facilities

Protecting Critical Facilities

Planning Partner mitigation actions that address vulnerable critical facilities have been proposed in consideration of protection against 500-year events or worst-case scenarios. However, in the case of projects funded through federal mitigation programs, the level of protection may be influenced by cost-effectiveness as determined through a formal benefit-cost analysis. In the case of “self-funded” projects, local jurisdiction discretion must be recognized. Further, it must be recognized that the County and jurisdictions have limited authority with regard to mitigation at any level of protection over privately owned critical facilities.

Accounting for Climate Change

As discussed in the hazard profiles in this HMP, the long-term effects of climate change are anticipated to exacerbate the impacts of weather-related hazards (e.g., flood, severe weather, severe winter weather, and wildfire). Communities are working to evaluate and recognize these long-term implications and to incorporate their mitigation strategies into planning and capital improvement updates.

16.3.2 Update of County Mitigation Strategy

The update of the County-level mitigation strategies included a review of progress on the actions identified in the 2020 HMP using a process similar to that used to review local jurisdiction mitigation strategy progress. County department representatives completed a Mitigation Action Plan Review Worksheet listing all County-level actions from the 2020 plan. They indicated the status of each action (“In Progress,” “Ongoing Capability,” “No Progress,” or “Complete”) and provided comments on each. This information is included in the County’s annex in Volume II.

Actions identified as “Complete” have been removed from this plan update. Actions identified as “No Progress” or “In Progress” were carried forward for inclusion in the County’s updated mitigation strategy or been discontinued for specific reasons. Actions identified as “Ongoing Capability” are included in the updated plan as capabilities identified in the capability assessment.

Throughout the course of the plan update process, additional regional and County-level mitigation actions were identified by the following processes:



- Review of the results and findings of the updated risk assessment
- Review of available regional and County plans, reports, and studies
- Direct input from County departments and other regional agencies, including:
 - Passaic County Office of Emergency Management
 - Passaic County Department of Public Works
 - Passaic County Department of Planning and Economic Development
 - Passaic County Department of Health and Human Services
 - Passaic County Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Passaic County Department of Public Works
 - Passaic County Water Authority
- Input received through the public and stakeholder outreach process

As discussed within the hazard profiles in this HMP, the long-term effects of climate change are anticipated to exacerbate the impacts of weather-related hazards including drought, flood, severe weather, and severe winter weather. The County has included mitigation actions, including continuing and long-term planning and emergency management support, to address these long-term implications and potential impacts.

Various County departments and agencies included mitigation actions to address vulnerable critical facilities. These actions were proposed in consideration of protection against 500-year events or worst-case scenarios. However, for projects funded through federal mitigation programs, the level of protection can be influenced by cost-effectiveness, as determined through a formal benefit-cost analysis. For “self-funded” projects, local government authority can affect the ability to implement. Further, the County has limited authority over privately owned critical facility owners regarding mitigation at any level of protection.

16.3.3 Mitigation Best Practices

Catalogs of hazard mitigation best practices were developed that present a broad range of alternatives to be considered for use in the mitigation strategies, in compliance with 44 CFR Section 201.6(c)(3)(ii). One catalog was developed for each hazard of concern evaluated in this plan. The catalogs present alternatives that are categorized based on the following considerations:

- Who would have responsibility for implementation:
 - Individuals—personal scale
 - Businesses—corporate scale
 - Government—government scale
- What the alternatives would do:
 - Manipulate the hazard
 - Reduce vulnerability to the hazard
 - Reduce impacts from the hazard
 - Build local capacity to respond to or be prepared for the hazard

The alternatives presented include actions that will mitigate current risk from hazards and actions that will help reduce risk from changes in the impacts of these hazards resulting from climate change. Hazard mitigation



actions recommended in this plan were selected from among the alternatives presented in the catalogs. The catalogs provide a baseline of mitigation alternatives that are backed by a planning process, are consistent with the established goals and objectives, and are within the capabilities of the Planning Partners to implement. Some of these actions may not be feasible based on the selection criteria identified for this plan. The purpose of the catalogs was to provide a list of what could be considered to reduce risk from natural hazards within the planning area. Actions in the catalog that are not included for the partnership's mitigation strategy were not selected for one or more of the following reasons:

- The action is not feasible
- The action is already being implemented
- There is an apparently more cost-effective alternative
- The action does not have public or political support.

The catalogs are included in Appendix M.

16.3.4 Mitigation Strategy Evaluation and Prioritization

Section 201.c.3.iii of 44 CFR establishes how mitigation strategies are to be prioritized, implemented, and administered by local jurisdictions. For this plan update, each mitigation strategy was prioritized using criteria suitable for evaluating hazard mitigation strategies. This method provided a systematic approach that considered the opportunities and constraints of implementing each mitigation action. The Steering Committee chose a set of 14 evaluation criteria for this process:

- Life Safety—How effective will the action be at protecting lives and preventing injuries? Will the proposed action adversely affect one segment of the population?
- Property Protection—How significant will the action be at eliminating or reducing damage to structures and infrastructure? For example: development in the floodplain or high-risk areas?
- Cost-Effectiveness—Are the costs to implement the action commensurate with the benefits achieved?
- Political—Is there overall public support for the action? Is there the political will to support it? Is the action at odds with development pressures?
- Legal—Does the jurisdiction have the authority to implement the action?
- Fiscal—Can the action be funded under existing program budgets (i.e., is this action currently budgeted for)? Or would it require a new budget authorization or funding from another source such as grants?
- Environmental—What are the potential environmental impacts of the action? Will it comply with environmental regulations? Are there co-benefits of this action?
- Social Vulnerability—Does the action benefit socially vulnerable populations and underserved communities? Additional considerations can include appropriate numerical measures of social vulnerability.
- Administrative—Does the jurisdiction have the personnel and administrative capabilities to implement the action and maintain it or will outside help be necessary? Does the scale and scope of the action align with the jurisdiction's capabilities?
- Hazards of Concern—Does the action address one or more of the jurisdiction's high-ranked hazards?
- Climate Change—Does the action incorporate climate change projections? Is the action designed to withstand/address long-term conditions?



- Timeline—Can the action be completed in less than five years?
- Community Lifelines—Does this action benefit community lifelines?
- Other Local Objectives—Does the action advance other local objectives, such as capital improvements, economic development, environmental quality, or open space preservation? Does it support the policies of other plans and programs?

Participating jurisdictions were asked to use these criteria to prioritize their identified mitigation actions. For each mitigation action, the jurisdictions assigned a numeric score for each of the 14 evaluation criteria:

- 1 = Highly effective or feasible
- 0 = Neutral
- -1 = Ineffective or not feasible

Jurisdictions were asked to provide a summary of the rationale behind the numeric rankings assigned. The numerical results were totaled and then used by each jurisdiction to help prioritize the action or strategy as *low*, *medium*, or *high*. Actions that had a numerical value between 0 and 6 were categorized as *low priority*; actions with numerical values between 7 and 10 were categorized as *medium priority*; and actions with numerical values between 11 and 14 were categorized as *high priority*. While this provided a consistent, systematic methodology to support the evaluation and prioritization of mitigation actions, jurisdictions may have additional considerations that could influence their overall prioritization of mitigation actions.

It is noted that jurisdictions may be carrying forward mitigation actions from prior mitigation strategies that were prioritized using a different, but not inherently contrary, approach. Mitigation actions in the 2020 Passaic County HMP were qualitatively evaluated against the mitigation goals and objectives and other evaluation criteria. They were then prioritized into three categories: high, medium, and low. At their discretion, jurisdictions carrying forward prior actions were encouraged to re-evaluate their priority, particularly if conditions that would affect the prioritization criteria had changed.

For the plan update there has been an effort to develop more clearly defined and action-oriented mitigation strategies. These local strategies include actions that are seen by the community as the most effective approaches to advance their local mitigation goals and objectives within their capabilities. In addition, each Planning Partner was asked to develop problem statements. With active support from NJOEM planning staff, the partners were able to develop action-oriented and achievable mitigation strategies. For that reason, many of the actions in the updated mitigation strategy were ranked as *high* or *medium* priority, as reflective of the community's clear intent to implement them, available resources notwithstanding. In general, actions that would have had *low* priority rankings were appropriately screened out during the local action evaluation process.

16.3.5 Benefit/Cost Review

Section 201.6.c.3iii of 44 CFR requires the prioritization of the mitigation strategy to emphasize the extent to which benefits are maximized according to a benefit/cost review of the proposed projects. For all actions identified in the local strategies, jurisdictions identified the associated costs and benefits as follows:

- **Costs** presented include the total project estimation. This can include administrative, construction (engineering, design, and permitting), and maintenance costs.
- **Benefits** are the savings from losses avoided attributed to project implementation. These can include life safety, structure and infrastructure damages, loss of service or function, and economic and environmental damage and losses.



When possible, jurisdictions were asked to identify the actual or estimated dollar costs and associated benefits. Where estimates of costs and benefits were available, the ratings were defined follows:

Low \leq \$10,000

Medium = \$10,000 to \$100,000

High \geq \$100,000

Where numerical costs or benefits could not be quantified, jurisdictions were asked to evaluate project cost-effectiveness using qualitative *high*, *medium*, and *low* ratings based on the following definitions:

- Costs
 - High—Existing funding levels are not adequate to cover the costs of the proposed project, and implementation would require an increase in revenue through an alternative source (e.g., bonds, grants, and fee increases).
 - Medium—The project could be implemented with existing funding but would require a re-apportionment of the budget or a budget amendment, or the cost of the project would have to be spread over multiple years.
 - Low—The project could be funded under the existing budget. The project is part of or can be part of an existing, ongoing program.
- Benefits
 - High—Project will have an immediate impact on the reduction of risk exposure to life and property.
 - Medium—Project will have a long-term impact on the reduction of risk exposure to life and property or will provide an immediate reduction in the risk exposure to property.
 - Low—Long-term benefits of the project are difficult to quantify in the short-term.

Using this approach, projects with positive benefit versus cost ratios (such as high over high, high over medium, medium over low, etc.) are considered cost-effective.

For some of the Passaic County actions identified, the Planning Partnership may seek financial assistance under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) programs. These programs require detailed benefit/cost analysis as part of the application process. The benefit/cost review applied for the prioritization of actions in this update did not include the level of detail required by FEMA for project grant eligibility under HMA grant programs. These analyses will be performed when funding applications are prepared, using FEMA's Benefit-Cost Analysis model.

The Planning Partnership is committed to implementing mitigation strategies with benefits that exceed costs. For projects not seeking financial assistance from grant programs that require this sort of analysis, the Planning Partnership reserves the right to define benefits according to parameters that meet its needs and the goals and objectives of this plan.