



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hazard mitigation is an action to help reduce long-term risks caused by hazards or disasters, such as flooding, earthquakes, or wildfires. The purpose of hazard mitigation is to protect people and structures, and minimize the costs of disaster response and recovery. Hazard mitigation can take many forms: capital projects, policies, education, and environmental protection. A hazard mitigation plan (HMP) documents a local government’s evaluation of hazards and the strategies to mitigate those hazards.

Hazard Mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk and effects that can result from specific hazards.

FEMA defines a **Hazard Mitigation Plan** as the documentation of a state or local government evaluation of natural hazards and the strategies to mitigate such hazards.

Erie County and 46 jurisdictions actively participated in the HMP update process. Table ES-1 lists the participating jurisdictions.

Table ES-1. Participating Jurisdictions in the 2021 Erie County HMP Update

Jurisdictions	
Erie County	Gowanda, Village of
Erie County Water Authority	Grand Island, Town of
Akron, Village of	Hamburg, Town of
Alden, Town of	Hamburg, Village of
Alden, Village of	Holland, Town of
Amherst, Town of	Kenmore, Village of
Angola, Village of	Lackawanna, City of
Aurora, Town of	Lancaster, Town of
Blasdell, Village of	Lancaster, Village of
Boston, Town of	Marilla, Town of
Brant, Town of	Newstead, Town of
Buffalo, City of	North Collins, Town of
Cheektowaga, Town of	North Collins, Village of
Clarence, Town of	Orchard Park, Town of
Colden, Town of	Orchard Park, Village of
Collins, Town of	Sardinia, Town of
Concord, Town of	Sloan, Village of
Depew, Village of	Springville, Village of
East Aurora, Village of	Tonawanda, City of
Eden, Town of	Tonawanda, Town of
Elma, Town of	Wales, Town of
Evans, Town of	West Seneca, Town of
Farnham, Village of	Williamsville, Village of

During the Erie County HMP planning process, the nation, the State of New York, and Erie County were facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was declared a major disaster on March 20, 2020 (DR-





4480). The Governor issued a stay-at-home Executive Order beginning March 22, 2020, which has since been revoked.

The Erie County Office of Emergency Services, Department of Public Works, the Steering Committee members, and the planning partners were addressing the COVID-19 pandemic concurrent with completing the update to the HMP. Erie County and all planning partners made their best effort to work through this unprecedented time to complete the HMP update and meet FEMA and state requirements. Unfortunately, in-person public meetings were canceled for the safety of residents and planning partners. However, Steering Committee, Planning Partnership, jurisdiction-specific, and public meetings continued virtually. More targeted stakeholder and public involvement was initiated to ensure a broad audience was reached, described further below.

During this HMP update process, Erie County and the participating jurisdictions accomplished the following:

- Developed a Steering Committee and Planning Partnership
- Reviewed and updated the hazards of concern
- Profiled and prioritized these hazards
- Estimated inventory at risk and potential losses associated with these hazards
- Reviewed and updated hazard mitigation goals and objectives
- Reviewed and updated County and local mitigation strategies to address identified risks and vulnerabilities

ERIE COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

Erie County developed and adopted the original Erie County HMP in 2007 and updated the plan in 2015. The DMA 2000 regulations require that local plans be formally updated and adopted every five (5) years, reassessing risk and updating local strategies to manage and mitigate those risks. To comply, Erie County and its inclusive jurisdictions actively participated in the 2021 update of the HMP. Extensive outreach efforts by the Erie County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services resulted in participation from all 46 jurisdictions. Upon completion and approval of the HMP, participating jurisdictions will continue to address and implement the findings and recommendations of this HMP.

As required by the DMA 2000, the participating jurisdictions and Erie County have informed the public about HMP update efforts and have provided opportunities for public comment and input regarding the planning process. In addition, numerous agencies and stakeholders have participated as core or support members to provide input and expertise to the planning process. This HMP documents the process and outcomes of the jurisdictions' mitigation planning efforts.

Erie County and the participating jurisdictions incorporate mitigation planning as an integral component of daily government operations through existing processes and programs. A public outreach campaign was initiated to commence the HMP update. A citizen survey to gauge hazard preparedness was developed. The survey asked quantifiable questions about citizen perception of risk, knowledge of mitigation, and support of community programs. Stakeholder surveys across multiple sectors was distributed to obtain input. The citizen survey was posted on the County's mitigation plan website (<https://www.eriecountynyhmp.com/>). The stakeholder surveys were sent by the Erie County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to applicable stakeholder groups. Updates to the HMP will be announced on the County website and via municipal outreach after annual plan reviews and 5-year updates. The County HMP Coordinator and local planning partnership representatives will be responsible for receiving, tracking, and filing public comments regarding this HMP when posted for draft public review and throughout the plan's period of performance.



ERIE COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN ADOPTION

Following formal Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approval of this HMP update, Erie County and all participating jurisdictions will be required to formally adopt the updated HMP. A sample of an adoption resolution is included in Appendix A (Adoption Resolutions). Of the 46 participating planning partners listed in Table ES-1, all fully met the participation requirements specified by the Steering Committee.

ERIE COUNTY PROFILE

Development increases population and structures and therefore can increase the impact of hazards on a community. For example, heavy development planned for a flood-prone area would likely increase the impact of the flood events as time progresses.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) Census data, Erie County had a population of 919,355. Erie County is located in southwest New York State, north of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The County is bordered by Chautauqua County to the west, Erie and Wyoming Counties to the north, Allegany County to the east, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the south.

Erie County is located in the northwest portion of the Allegheny Plateau region of New York State. The northern part of the County is generally flat, while steeper slopes are found in the central and southern parts of the County. The southern region of the County – characterized by hills and valleys – is the only unglaciated portion of western New York State. Cuba Lake, Lime Lake, Crystal Lake, Quaker Lake, Rainbow Lake, Red House Lake, Science Lake, and Timber Lake are within the County.

Land use in Erie County is influenced by natural resources, topographic constraints, water lines, sewers, and roads. The county has a relatively compact development pattern and is made up of rural, suburban, and urban areas. Agriculture remains a large land use. Although the number of farms is decreasing slightly, the size of farms is increasing. This trend toward fewer but larger farm operations parallels statewide trends (Erie County Department of Economic Development, Planning & Tourism 2015).

The Erie County HMP provides a general overview of current and anticipated population and land use within the study area. This information provides a basis for making decisions regarding the type of mitigation approaches to consider and the locations in which these approaches should be applied. This information can also be used to support decisions regarding future development in vulnerable areas. For potential increases in vulnerability, the County and jurisdictions can then plan ahead to mitigate those vulnerabilities early in the development process or can direct development to areas of lower risk. The Planning Partnership will revisit the HMP regularly to ensure that mitigation actions support sustainability to minimize increased risk, and to also ensure implementation and targeting of specific mitigation actions will address the potential impacts of development over time.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A key component of an HMP is accurate identification of risks posed by hazards and corresponding impacts on the community. The process of identifying hazards of concern, profiling hazard events, and conducting a vulnerability assessment is known as a risk assessment. The risk assessment portion of the mitigation planning process included the steps shown and summarized below.





Step 1: Identify hazards of concern. Erie County considered the full range of natural and non-natural hazards that could impact the County and then identified and ranked hazards of greatest concern. The following list of 13 hazards of concern was selected for further evaluation in the HMP:

- Coastal Erosion
- Cyber Security
- Earthquake
- Expansive Soils
- Extreme Temperature
- Flood
- Hazardous Materials
- Landslide
- Pandemic
- Severe Storm
- Severe Winter Storm
- Utility Failure
- Wildfire

Step 2: Prepare a profile for each hazard of concern. These profiles assist jurisdictions in evaluating and comparing hazards that can impact their areas. Each type of hazard has unique characteristics that differ from event to event. That is, impacts associated with a specific hazard can vary depending on the magnitude and location of each event (a hazard event is a specific, uninterrupted occurrence of a particular type of hazard). Further, probability of occurrence of a hazard at a given location affects the priority assigned to that hazard. Finally, each hazard impacts different communities in different ways, depending on geography, local development, population distribution, age of buildings, and mitigation measures already implemented.

Steps 3 and 4: Evaluate assets of jurisdictions and identify assets exposed or vulnerable to the hazards of concern. Hazard profile information, combined with data regarding population, demographics, general building stock, and critical facilities at risk, prepares the community to develop risk scenarios and estimate potential damages and losses from each hazard.

Once the risk assessment was completed, the County and participating jurisdictions evaluated the risk and vulnerability to each hazard for their community. This served as a starting point in identifying and prioritizing mitigation strategies.

ERIE COUNTY MITIGATION STRATEGY

Outcomes of the risk assessment, supplemented by community input, provided a basis for reviewing past mitigation actions, future goals, and appropriate local mitigation actions.

Goals and Objectives

The 2015 HMP specified overarching mitigation goals with corresponding objectives that summarized hazard reduction outcomes the County and participating jurisdictions want to achieve. During the 2021 plan update process, the Steering Committee reviewed the goals and objectives established in the 2015 HMP. These goals and objectives were reviewed in consideration of the hazard events and losses since the 2015 plan; the updated hazard profiles and vulnerability assessment; the goals and objectives established in the 2019 NYS HMP, county and local risk management plans; and direct input from the County and jurisdictions for how to meet their needs to advance and best manage their hazard risk. Amendments include additions/edits to goals and objectives to



express the planning partnership’s interests in integrating this plan with other planning mechanisms/programs and to support mitigation through the protection and preservation of natural systems (refer to Section 6 – Mitigation Strategies). The following summarizes the three (3) updated goals for the 2021 HMP.

1. Protect life, property, and critical infrastructure from hazard impacts.
2. Educate the public, officials, and other stakeholders about the hazards they face and what can be done to mitigate hazard impacts.
3. Reduce the risk of hazards on life, property, and the environment.

Capability Assessment

The Capability Assessment section of Section 6 (Mitigation Strategy) provides a summary and description of the existing plans, programs and regulatory mechanisms at all levels of government (federal state, county, and local) that support hazard mitigation within the county. Within each jurisdictional annex in Section 9 (Jurisdictional Annexes), the county and each participating jurisdiction identified how they have integrated hazard risk management into their existing planning, regulatory and operational/administrative framework (“existing integration”), and how they intend to promote this integration (“opportunities for future integration”).

By completing these assessments, Erie County and participating jurisdictions learned how or whether they would be able to implement certain mitigation actions by determining the following:

- Types of mitigation actions that may be prohibited by law
- Limitations that may hinder mitigation actions
- The range of local and state administrative, programmatic, regulatory, financial, and technical resources available to assist in implementing their mitigation actions

Identification, Prioritization, Analysis, and Implementation of Mitigation Actions

As part of the planning process for this HMP update, all participating jurisdictions evaluated their risks and known or anticipated losses to the hazards of concern, assessed their capabilities to manage hazard risk, reviewed progress on past mitigation efforts, and identified a comprehensive range of mitigation alternatives and actions they endeavor to implement as resources are identified and available. The HMP identifies all proposed mitigation actions relevant to achievement of the goals and objectives presented above. The county and participating jurisdictions have identified appropriate local mitigation actions, along with hazards mitigated, goals and objectives met, lead agencies, estimated costs, potential funding sources, and proposed timeline. These actions are identified in Volume II, Section 9, which consists of annexes for the County and each participating jurisdiction.

PLAN MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

Hazard mitigation planning is an ongoing process. Section 7 (Plan Maintenance) of this plan presents procedures for how the County will monitor, integrate, evaluate, and update the HMP over the next five years. The Planning Partnership will continue ongoing mitigation efforts to implement the HMP and revise and update the HMP, as necessary.

To monitor implementation of the HMP, Planning Partnership members will meet annually to discuss the status of HMP implementation and will prepare a report summarizing the status of the HMP and any needed updates. The mitigation evaluation will address changes as new hazard events occur, as the area develops, and as more is learned about hazards and their impacts. The evaluation will include an assessment of whether the planning process and actions have been effective, whether development or other issues warrant changes to the HMP or its



priorities, progress toward achievement of the communities' goals, and whether changes are warranted. The HMP will be updated, at a minimum, within the 5-year cycle specified by the DMA 2000.

POINT OF CONTACT

To request information or provide comments regarding this HMP, please contact the Erie County HMP Coordinator:

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