

# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION

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This section provides a general introduction to the City of Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan. It consists of the following five subsections:

- ◆ 1.1 Background
- ◆ 1.2 Purpose
- ◆ 1.3 Scope
- ◆ 1.4 Authority
- ◆ 1.5 Summary of Plan Contents

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### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Natural hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, are a part of the world around us. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little we can do to control their force and intensity. We must consider these hazards to be legitimate and significant threats to human life, safety and property.

The City of Myrtle Beach is vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards, including hurricanes and tropical storms, flooding, tornadoes, storm surge, and wildfires. The hazard that has gained the most recent awareness is sea level rise. As a coastal community, the City provides a major focus on hazards and events related to flooding. These hazards threaten the life and safety of city residents, and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property, disrupt the local economy and impact the overall quality of life of individuals who live, work, and vacation in the community. This vulnerability was most recently highlighted through the winter storm of 2014 which the area is not typically accustomed to as a southern, coastal community.

While the threat from hazardous events may never be fully eliminated, there is much we can do to lessen their potential impact upon our community and our citizens. By minimizing the impact of hazards upon our built environment, we can prevent such events from resulting in disasters. The concept and practice of reducing risks to people and property from known hazards is generally referred to as *hazard mitigation*.



**FEMA Definition of Hazard Mitigation:**

*“Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards.”*

Hazard mitigation techniques include both structural measures (such as strengthening or protecting buildings and infrastructure from the destructive forces of potential hazards) and non-structural measures (such as the adoption of sound land use policies and the creation of public awareness programs). It is widely accepted that the most effective mitigation measures are implemented at the local government level, where decisions on the regulation and control of development are ultimately made. A comprehensive mitigation approach addresses hazard vulnerabilities that exist today and in the foreseeable future. Therefore it is essential that projected patterns of future development are evaluated and considered in terms of how that growth will increase or decrease a community's overall hazard vulnerability.

As a community formulates a comprehensive approach to hazard mitigation, a key component is to develop, adopt and update as needed, a local hazard mitigation plan. A hazard mitigation plan establishes the broad community vision and guiding principles for reducing hazard risk, and further proposes specific mitigation actions to eliminate or reduce identified vulnerabilities.

The City of Myrtle Beach has developed a Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan that has evolved over the years, as more thoroughly described in Section 2: Planning Process. The Plan documents and represents the City's sustained efforts to incorporate hazard mitigation principles and practices into the routine government activities and functions of the City of Myrtle Beach. At its core, the Plan recommends specific actions to combat hazard vulnerability and protect residents from losses to those hazards that pose the greatest risk. These mitigation actions go beyond simply recommending structural solutions to reduce existing vulnerability, such as elevation, retrofitting and acquisition projects. Local policies on community growth and development, incentives for natural resource protection, and public awareness and outreach activities are examples of other actions considered to reduce Myrtle Beach's future vulnerability to identified hazards. The Plan remains a living document, with implementation and evaluation procedures included to help achieve meaningful objectives and successful outcomes over time.

### **1.1.1 Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004**

In an effort to reduce the Nation's mounting natural disaster losses, the U.S. Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) in order to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Section 322 of DMA 2000 emphasizes the need for state and local government entities to closely coordinate on mitigation planning activities, and makes the development of a hazard mitigation plan a specific eligibility requirement for any local government applying for federal mitigation grant funds. These funds include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, both of which are administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Department of Homeland Security. Communities with an adopted and federally-approved hazard mitigation plan thereby become pre-positioned and more apt to receive available mitigation funds before and after the next disaster strikes.

Additionally, the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-264) created two new grant programs: the Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL), and Repetitive Flood Claim (RFC). The Act also modified the existing Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA). One of the requirements of this Act is that a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan is now required if communities wish to be eligible for these FEMA mitigation programs.

The Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan has been prepared in coordination with FEMA Region IV and the South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) to ensure that the Plan meets all applicable FEMA and state requirements for hazard mitigation plans. A *Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk*, found in Appendix C, provides a summary of federal and state minimum standards and notes the location where each requirement is met within the Plan.

## 1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the City of Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan is to:

- ◆ Provide a comprehensive update to the *City of Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan*, as amended in 2004.
- ◆ Protect life, safety and property by reducing the potential for future damages and economic losses that result from hazards;
- ◆ Make the community a safer place to live, work and play;
- ◆ Qualify the City of Myrtle Beach for grant funding in both the pre-disaster and post-disaster environments;
- ◆ Speed recovery and redevelopment following future disaster events;
- ◆ Demonstrate a firm local commitment to hazard mitigation principles;
- ◆ Maintain compliance with state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans; and
- ◆ Meet the requirements of the Community Rating System (CRS) program.

## 1.3 SCOPE

The focus of the City of Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan is on those hazards determined to be “high” or “moderate” risks to the City, as determined through a detailed hazard risk assessment. Other hazards that pose a “low” or “negligible” risk will continue to be evaluated during future updates to the Plan, but they may not be fully addressed until they are determined to be of high or moderate risk. This enables the City to prioritize mitigation actions based on those hazards which are understood to present the greatest risk to lives and property.

The geographic scope (i.e., the planning area) for the Plan includes all areas within the incorporated jurisdiction of Myrtle Beach.

## 1.4 AUTHORITY

The City of Myrtle Beach Floodplain Management and Hazard Mitigation Plan has been developed in accordance with current state and federal rules and regulations governing local hazard mitigation plans, and has been adopted by the City of Myrtle Beach in accordance with standard local procedures. A copy of the City’s adoption resolution is provided in Appendix A. The Plan shall be routinely monitored and revised to maintain compliance with the following provisions, rules and legislation:

- ◆ Section 322, Mitigation Planning, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as enacted by Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-390);
- ◆ FEMA's Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201; and,

- ◆ Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004.

## 1.5 SUMMARY OF PLAN CONTENTS

The contents of this Plan are designed and organized to be as reader-friendly and functional as possible. While significant background information is included on the processes used and studies completed (i.e., risk assessment, capability assessment), this information is separated from the more meaningful planning outcomes or actions (i.e., mitigation strategy, mitigation action plan).

Section 2: **Planning Process**, provides a complete narrative description of the process used to prepare the Plan. This includes the identification of who was involved, who participated on the planning team, and how the public and other stakeholders were involved. It also includes a detailed summary for each of the key meetings held, along with any associated outcomes.

The **Community Profile**, located in Section 3, describes the general makeup of Myrtle Beach, including prevalent geographic, demographic and economic characteristics. In addition, building characteristics and land use patterns are discussed. This baseline information provides a snapshot of the planning area and helps local officials recognize those social, environmental and economic factors that ultimately play a role in determining community vulnerability to hazards.

The Risk Assessment is presented in two sections: Section 4: **Hazard Identification and Analysis**; Section 5: **Vulnerability Assessment**. Together, these sections serve to identify, analyze and assess hazards that pose a threat to the City of Myrtle Beach. The risk assessment also attempts to define any hazard risks that may uniquely or exclusively affect specific areas of Myrtle Beach.

The Risk Assessment builds on available historical data from past hazard occurrences, establishes detailed profiles for each hazard, and culminates in a hazard risk ranking based on conclusions about the frequency of occurrence, spatial extent and potential impact of each hazard. FEMA's HAZUS<sup>®MH</sup> loss estimation methodology was also used in evaluating known hazard risks by their relative long-term cost in expected damages. In essence, the information generated through the risk assessment serves a critical function as Myrtle Beach seeks to determine the most appropriate mitigation actions to pursue and implement—enabling it to prioritize and focus its efforts on those hazards of greatest concern and those structures or planning areas facing the greatest risk(s).

The **Capability Assessment**, found in Section 6, provides a comprehensive examination of the City of Myrtle Beach's capacity to implement meaningful mitigation strategies and identifies opportunities to increase and enhance that capacity. Specific capabilities addressed in this section include planning and regulatory capability, staff and organizational (administrative) capability, technical capability, fiscal capability, and political capability. Information was obtained through the use of detailed survey questionnaires for local officials and an inventory and analysis of existing plans, ordinances and relevant documents. The purpose of this assessment is to identify any existing gaps, weaknesses or conflicts in programs or activities that may hinder mitigation efforts, and to identify those activities that should be built upon in establishing a successful and sustainable local hazard mitigation program.

The *Community Profile*, *Risk Assessment*, and *Capability Assessment* collectively serve as a basis for determining the goals for the Myrtle Beach Hazard Mitigation Plan, each contributing to the

development, adoption and implementation of a meaningful and manageable *Mitigation Strategy* that is based on accurate background information.

The ***Mitigation Strategy***, found in Section 7, consists of broad goal statements as well as an analysis of hazard mitigation techniques for Myrtle Beach to consider in reducing hazard vulnerabilities. The strategy provides the foundation for a detailed ***Mitigation Action Plan***, found in Section 8, which links specific mitigation actions for each City department or agency to locally-assigned implementation mechanisms and target completion dates. Together, these sections are designed to make the Plan both strategic, through the identification of long-term goals, and functional, through the identification of immediate and short-term actions that will guide day-to-day decision-making and project implementation.

In addition to the identification and prioritization of possible mitigation projects, emphasis is placed on the use of program and policy alternatives to help make the City of Myrtle Beach less vulnerable to the damaging forces of hazards while improving the economic, social and environmental health of the community. The concept of multi-objective planning was emphasized throughout the planning process, particularly in identifying ways to link, where possible, hazard mitigation policies and programs with complimentary community goals related to disaster recovery, housing, economic development, recreational opportunities, transportation improvements, environmental quality, land development, and public health and safety.

***Plan Maintenance Procedures***, found in Section 9, includes the measures that the City of Myrtle Beach will take to ensure the Plan's continuous long-term implementation. The procedures also include the manner in which the Plan will be regularly evaluated and updated to remain a current and meaningful planning document.