



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Director
Mike Hinson

County Executive
Calvin Ball

MEMORANDUM

To: Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Michael Hinson, Office of Emergency Management
Date: September 21, 2023
Re: Administrative testimony on the Resolution adopting the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Council Resolution No. ___-2023 adopts the Howard County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (the “Plan”). Previous Plans have been adopted by the passage of Council Resolution No. 112-2004, No. 22-2013, and No. 6-2019.

Mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. For mitigation to be effective we need to act now—before the next disaster—to reduce human, environmental, and financial consequences later. Dollars spent today on mitigation projects will significantly reduce the demand for future dollars by decreasing the need for emergency response, recovery, repair, and reconstruction. In fact, according to the National Institute of Building Science as of 2020, mitigation funding can save the nation \$13 in future disaster costs, for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation. This number was \$6 for every \$1 in 2017. Most importantly, a strong mitigation program will lessen the threat to life safety from natural hazards.

This Plan is a strategic plan that proposes actions to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from future natural disasters while considering how climate change will exacerbate these disasters. It is the representation of Howard County’s commitment to reduce risks from natural hazards and is meant to serve as a guide for decision makers as we commit resources to reducing the effects of natural hazards. Local level hazard mitigation plans also serve as the basis for the State to provide technical assistance and to prioritize project funding. The Plan covers natural hazards across the County that were deemed most likely to occur while considering the threat posed. This list was finalized by the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Steering Committee in January 2023, and this list is regularly evolving as the County faces new threats, especially due to climate change.

The last Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan was passed by the Council in 2019. The 2024-2029 Plan update provided Howard County with the opportunity to add more detail, discuss the effects of future development and climate change, examine the impacts of natural hazards on underserved and under-resourced populations, and develop new actions to further strengthen Howard County’s resiliency to natural hazards. For the Implementation Plan section, there are a total of 28 ongoing actions that are continuously carried out and 13 actions that are in cue as of the 2024 update. Nine actions from the

previous update were completed with four being completed prior to the 2021 annual review and five being marked as completed after the 2021 annual review. Ten actions have been added to the table for this update. Mitigation actions were also prioritized by the Joint Steering Committee and appear in order from highest priority to lowest priority. The chart listing these actions can be found in the 2024-2029 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan starting on page 219. We have listed the top five mitigation actions at the conclusion of this written testimony.

As part of the Plan development process, we established a Joint Steering Committee (which also updated the Flood Mitigation Plan), conducted multiple public surveys, held three public meetings, held a public comment period, and had the Plan approved by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), and FEMA. Both MDEM and FEMA reported that the Plan was thorough, strong, and met all requirements. Both agencies have formally approved the Plan pending the Council's adoption of the Plan.

Fiscal Impact

The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000¹ requires that a local government must have a mitigation plan approved to receive Hazard Mitigation Grant Program project grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While we are required to have an approved plan every five years to be eligible for funding, *the Plan does not obligate the County to fund any specific hazard mitigation projects*. Accordingly, the Plan has no fiscal impact; instead, the Plan acts as a guide for Howard County mitigation projects, as well as for the spending of mitigation grant funds received.

The County Executive, through his Office of Emergency Management, respectfully requests that the Howard County Council adopt the 2024-2029 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Please see the top five mitigation actions below:

1. Continue to utilize FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) for sudden onset hazards such as tornados, thunderstorms, or flash floods.
2. Perform flood mitigation for Historic Ellicott City, consistent with the Ellicott City Safe and Sound Flood Mitigation Plan, by designing and constructing the North Tunnel, Maryland Avenue Culvert, Pond H-7, Pond H-4, Quaker Mill Pond, Pond NC-3, and Pond T-1, as well as performing other non-capital project efforts consistent with the Safe and Sound Plan.
3. Encourage local businesses and local industry owners to develop a business continuity plan and provide educational materials.
4. Ensure that applicable codes and ordinances, such as building codes, floodplain ordinances, wetland protection, and erosion and sediment control standards are consistently enforced.
5. Continue to update, maintain, and implement existing emergency plans, including but not limited to, recovery, response, and/or emergency operations plans.

¹ 42 U.S.C § 5165 et seq.