

# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Gretna is subject to flood hazards that threaten life and health and can cause extensive property damage. To better understand these hazards and their impacts on people and property, and to identify ways to reduce those impacts, the City of Gretna undertook this *Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

This *Plan* was developed under the guidance of a Mitigation Planning Committee, authorized by City Council Resolution 2006-104. The Planning Committee's members included representatives of City departments involved in mitigation activities. The Mitigation Planning Committee followed a standard 10-step process, based on FEMA's guidance and requirements. The result is this *Plan*, a blueprint for reducing the impacts of flooding on people and property. This *Plan* also fulfills the planning requirements for FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance program and qualifies for Community Rating System credit.

### Mitigation Planning Committee Members

Ronnie C. Harris	Mayor
Susan Percle	Chief Administrative Officer
Mike Metcalf	Inspections
Ronnie Gauthreaux	Inspections, Public information officer
Jack Griffin	Public Works/Emergency Management
Brent Lawson	Resident

## 2. The Flood Hazard

The City of Gretna is subject to two flood hazards:

- Flooding from rain and stormwater that overloads the drainage system, and
- Flooding from the failure of one of the levees that surround the area.

No part of the City is free from repetitive shallow flooding caused by an overloaded drainage system (see map) and no part of the City is free from damage by a levee failure.

While damaging and causing safety and health problems, most floods in Gretna do not threaten lives, destroy buildings or cause substantial structural damage. Flooding from a levee failure is a different story – such a hazard can kill people and wipe out large areas of the City. All of the flood hazards cause health and mental health problems. Flooding also affects critical facilities and key City services and utilities.



Because the City has not experienced a levee failure in recent history, flooding to date has been primarily a problem of property damage. The City is one of the most repeatedly floodprone communities in the country with over 3,000 flood insurance claim payments and over 400 repetitive loss properties.

### 3. Goals

After reviewing the goals of existing City plans and conducting a goal setting exercise, the Mitigation Planning Committee agreed to five overall goals of the flood mitigation planning effort. They are listed in order of importance.

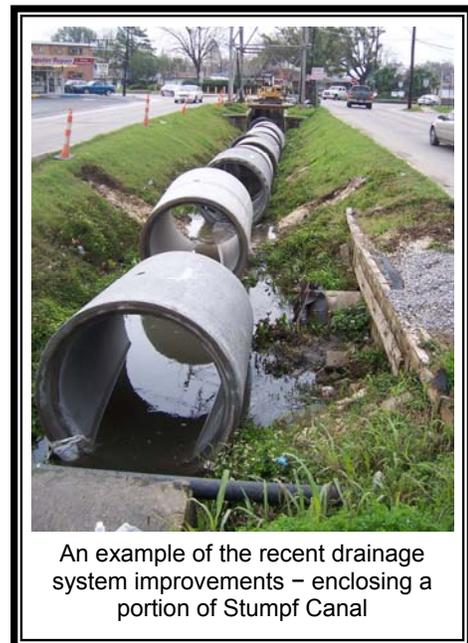
1. Protect critical facilities and utilities
2. Protect lives and health
3. Protect homes, businesses, and schools
4. Minimize the costs to the City and property owners
5. Ensure that new construction supports these goals



### 4. Flood Control

The Chapter reviews measures that control or manage floodwaters, including levees, drainage channels, storage basins, and drainage system maintenance. It concludes that:

- The levees on the north and east of the City provide protection from almost all floods from the Mississippi River. The levees to the south and west need to be improved to provide acceptable protection from coastal storms and hurricanes. Improvements are underway.
- The canals and the pump stations that drain them have been improved and more improvements are planned. The product of this work may already be evident in the form of fewer flood insurance claims.
- The City has utilized local storage basins to augment the canals and a third one may be constructed.
- The drainage system is well-maintained, although additional help from residents would make it more effective.



## 5. Property Protection

Property protection measures are used to modify buildings or property subject to flood damage. This chapter covers the following approaches:

- 5.1 Relocating the building out of harm's way,
- 5.2 Elevating the structure above flood level,
- 5.3 Erecting a small floodwall to keep the water from reaching the building,
- 5.4 Modifying the building so it can withstand the impacts of a flood,
- 5.5 Insuring the property to provide financial relief after the damage occurs.

While property protection measures are normally implemented by the property owner, the chapter reviews the variety of technical and financial assistance that can be provided by a government agency to encourage and support actions by the owners. The findings are:

- The most feasible measures protect property from local drainage system flooding. Only relocation/acquisition and elevation would protect properties from a levee failure and the former could only be accomplished by relocating the entire city.
- Property owners can implement some property protection measures at little cost, especially floodwalls and floodproofing that protect from shallow flooding. However, technical and financial assistance will help motivate them to pursue mitigation.
- Many property owners, but not all, have flood insurance coverage. While some City properties are covered by flood insurance and the City has met its legal requirements, not all buildings are insured for flood damage.



## 6. Preventive Measures

Preventive measures focus on the future. These measures are designed to keep the problem from getting worse by ensuring that future development does not increase flood damage. Five types of preventive measures are reviewed:

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6.1 Planning and zoning     | 6.4 Building codes       |
| 6.2 Open space preservation | 6.5 Drainage regulations |
| 6.3 Floodplain regulations  |                          |

The first two measures, planning, zoning and open space preservation, work to keep damage-prone development *out* of hazardous areas. The other measures impose standards on new developments to protect them from flooding, especially drainage system flooding.

Chapter 6 concludes:

- Because Gretna is substantially built up, planning and zoning measures will have limited impact on preventing and reducing flood losses.
- The City has adopted and is enforcing the latest building code provisions for protecting new buildings from damage by natural hazards. The City has requested a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule System (BCEGS) evaluation. A BCEGS Class of 6 or better will allow the City to improve its Community Rating System classification.
- The City has adopted and is enforcing the minimum floodplain management provisions of the National Flood Insurance Program. With the adoption of the advisory base flood elevations (ABFEs), these rules are being enforced throughout the City for new construction and substantial improvements to existing buildings.
- Staff appear to be properly administering the City's obligation to the NFIP, but an evaluation by FEMA is underway. The City plans to have at least one Certified Floodplain Manager on staff.
- The City has some drainage regulations, such as the requirement for retention basins, but is missing some other opportunities to protect new buildings from shallow flooding.



## 7. Emergency Services

Emergency services measures protect people during and after a disaster. This chapter reviews emergency services measures following a chronological order of responding to a flood:

- 7.1. Threat recognition – identifying an oncoming problem before it hits
- 7.2. Warning – getting the word out
- 7.3. Response – doing what can be done in the time available
- 7.4. Evacuation and shelter – getting people out of harm's way
- 7.5. Recovery and mitigation – clean up, repair and preparing for the next one

This review found:

- The City has a dependable system for advance notification of hurricanes, tropical storms, high river levels, and local storms.
- The system used to disseminate warnings to the public depends on radio, television and cable TV. These media should reach most people who need to know of the threat of a major storm or river flood. New approaches are being set up to warn people of threats with short lead time, such as tornadoes and severe thunderstorms.

- The City and the Parish are revising their emergency response plans to conform to the National Incident Management System and to incorporate lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Flood-specific sections have not yet been drafted.
- There are no specific plans for post-disaster inspections or capitalizing on post-disaster mitigation opportunities.
- It is not clear if the Parish will keep all of its CRS credit after the emergency operations plan is revised.



## 8. Public Information

A successful flood mitigation program involves both the public and private sectors. Public information activities advise property owners, renters, and businesses about hazards and ways to protect people and property from these hazards. These activities can motivate people to take steps to protect themselves and others.

This chapter starts with activities that reach out to people and tell them to be advised of the flood hazard and some of the things they can do. It then covers providing additional sources of information for those who want to learn more. It ends with an overall public information program strategy.

- 8.1 Outreach projects
- 8.2 Real estate disclosure
- 8.3 Technical information
- 8.4 Technical assistance

- Outreach projects, newsletters and websites can reach a lot of people, but the City is not including much hazard or mitigation information in its current activities.
- Current practices that disclose hazards to buyers of property are either dependent on the seller or provide the information late in the process.
- There are many flood protection references in the Jefferson Parish Library, but the latest publications are missing.
- The City's website has a limited amount of flood protection information and few links to sites with additional information.
- The Mitigation Planning Committee concluded that public information projects should be conducted to advise residents about ways to protect themselves from flooding and where they can get help.
- The most effective media to reach Gretna residents are mailings, notices, newsletters, and newspapers sent to residents and a flood protection website.



Jefferson Parish outreach project

## 9. Action Plan

The culmination of the *Hazard Mitigation Plan* is the series of action items presented in Chapter 9. There are 16 action items that address the flood hazards of levee failure and drainage problems, are appropriate for those hazards, are cost-effective, are affordable, and have minimal impact on the human and natural environment. Each action item is assigned to an office with a deadline.

1. **Plan Adoption:** The City Council will adopt the *Plan* by resolution.
2. **Monitoring and Reporting:** The Mitigation Planning Committee will monitor the implementation of this *Plan* and report progress to the City Council and the public.
3. **Community Rating System:** The City can improve its CRS rating to a Class 7.
4. **Levee Improvements:** The City will monitor and encourage work by the agencies involved in bringing the levees up to at least the 100-year flood standard.
5. **Drainage Improvements:** The City will prepare a multi-year capital improvements plan that will identify needed storm drain, drainage ditch, and canal improvements.
6. **Drainage System Maintenance:** The City will review and revise its procedures to maintain the storm drains, drainage ditches, and collector canals.
7. **Property Protection Funding:** The City will research available funding programs and how to run a rebate program and see if there are interested property owners.
8. **Regulatory Review:** The floodplain and drainage regulations will be reviewed to determine if they should be revised to strengthen the City's mitigation tools.
9. **NFIP Administration:** The City will remain in full compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program and will correct any problems found by FEMA's review.
10. **CFMs:** The Department of Inspections will have at least one Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM<sup>®</sup>) on staff.
11. **BCEGS:** A Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) review will be requested to evaluate the building code program and qualify for a better CRS class.
12. **Flood Response Plan:** The revisions to the City and Parish emergency operations plans will be completed and reviewed by CRS staff.
13. **Annual mailing:** A newsletter or mailing on flood protection topics will be sent to all residents and businesses each Spring.
14. **Technical References:** The references at the Jefferson Public Library will be updated and the City's website will have a new page on flood protection.
15. **Public Information Projects:** Current projects will be continued and some new ones should be tried each year.
16. **Public Information Messages:** The messages to be disseminated through the projects in action item 15 are described.