

Chapter 4: Planning Process

4 Chapter Overview

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4.1 Federal Prerequisites

This chapter of the Plan addresses the planning process requirements of 44 CFR Section 201.6(b) and (c)(1) and the process for the plan review and update requirements of Section 201.6(d)(3), as follows:

“201.6(b) Planning Process. An open public involvement process is essential to the development of an effective plan. In order to develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the effects of natural disasters, the planning process shall include:

- (1) An opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval;
- (2) An opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia, and other private and non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process; and
- (3) Review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information.”

“201.6(c) Plan Content. The plan shall include the following:

- (1) Documentation of the planning process used to development the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved, and how the public was involved.”

“201.6(d) Plan Review.

1. A local jurisdiction must review and revise its plan to reflect in development, progress in local mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities, and resubmit it for approval within 5 years in order to continue to be eligible for project grant funding.”

4.2 Summary of Plan Updates

Table 4-1 summarizes changes made to the 2004 plan as a result of the 2010 plan update, as follows:

Table 4-1: Updates to the Planning Process Section of the Plan

Summary of Plan Updates for Planning Process		
Section		Change
4.3	Public Comment and Involvement in the Planning Process	Updated public participation information
4.4	Multi-Jurisdictional Involvement in the Planning Process	Description provided of the process used for multi-jurisdictional involvement and information gathering
4.5	Review and Incorporation of Plans and Documents	Incorporated new or updated plans and scientific studies
4.6	Plan Preparation	Description provided for the process used to update the plan
4.7	Plan Review Process and Update	This is the first 5-year review and update of the plan

4.3 Public Comment and Involvement in the Planning Process

The public was invited to participate in the process and provide input to the Plan by attending meetings and providing comments via an internet site survey. The City of Alpharetta advertised (via its website) a public meeting informing the public of the opportunity to comment on the plan. The announcement was also picked up and broadcasted by the local newspaper before the event. The public meeting was held on the evening of March 15, 2012 at the City's Department of Engineering / Public Works location. A copy of the press release is included in the Public Involvement appendix. A public hearing for comment on the final plan was held on {insert date and time after final meeting has occurred.}

4.4 Multi-Jurisdictional Participation in the Planning Process

This Plan is serving as a City Annex to the countywide Atlanta-Fulton County Hazard Mitigation Plan and thus is not countywide in scope. However, Alpharetta MAC participation included representatives from outside the City to make sure those regional perspectives and concerns were brought into the planning process.

4.5 Review and Incorporation of Applicable Plans and Documents

The City of Alpharetta provided copies of its plans, studies, reports, ordinances, regulations and technical information to the planning team. The planning team reviewed the documents and noted relevant sections that pertained to hazard mitigation. These documents were examined to determine what mitigation measures were currently being pursued and what new measures could be included for future revisions and/or incorporation into this multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan. This was particularly important in the countywide document for the jurisdictions that had become incorporated since the development of the last hazard mitigation plan in 2004.

The City of Alpharetta Plan is intended to be specific to those impacts on its own jurisdiction. However, upon adoption it will become a City Annex to the Atlanta Fulton County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Therefore, this document will sometimes refer to the countywide planning activities that occurred before in order to educate the reader on the holistic nature of the hazard mitigation planning process. As part of the countywide plan review, the planning team discovered that there was wide variation in plan content and format. Some jurisdictions had their own hazard mitigations plans, while others “hybrid” documents that incorporated a general hazard profile as part of their emergency response/continuity of operations plans. As the City Annex is being incorporated into the countywide plan, it is important to reference those planning activities as well. Information specific to the City of Alpharetta’s capability assessment and plan integration is provided in further detail in section 7.4 later in this document.

The following documents were reviewed as part of the countywide update and included per reference in the City of Alpharetta’s Plan:

- Sandy Springs Hazard Mitigation Plan (AFCEMA)
- Johns Creek Emergency Response Framework (AFCEMA)
- EWP Dam Report on the September 2009 Floods
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources Guidance on Storm-Generated Debris
- GEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Comprehensive plans
- Flood ordinances
- Storm water management plans
- Atlanta Regional Planning Commission studies and reports
- NOAA and NWS storm events records
- FEMA and local disasters reports
- Scientific and academic studies regarding climatic trends
- Camp Creek Flooding Modeling Study
- Dam Report
- Roswell Watershed Improvement Plan(AFCEMA)

4.6 Plan Preparation

On October 31, 2011, a coordination meeting was held between the City of Alpharetta and its contractor, Dewberry. At the meeting, information was exchanged on what types of stakeholders should make up the MAC, what pertinent data is available to start reviewing and how would the leads interact throughout the project in preparation for the upcoming five year plan update. A web-based portal was agreed upon and implemented to load documents as well as exchange information between the City, Dewberry and the MAC.

Later that year, on November 15, 2011, a kickoff meeting was held at the City of Alpharetta’s Engineer / Public Works facility. This was the first formal meeting of the participating MAC members and was mainly a re-introduction to hazard mitigation planning. The meeting discussions covered a review of the 2004 plan, the State’s hazard mitigation planning process, and the 2011/12 update activities. The first planning meeting discussed the risk assessment methodology that should be used to conduct risk assessments for each jurisdiction. In addition, a discussion of hazard risk prioritization was held to identify what natural hazards the group

wanted to focus on during the plan update. A web address to an online survey was provided to the MAC members to facilitate the hazard prioritization process. Consistent with the AFC Hazard Mitigation Plan, ranking was performed using two dimensions – Level of Severity and Probability/Likelihood of Event. This method allowed for a more accurate assessment of the risks posed to the jurisdiction by the hazard. The consultant outlined the individual jurisdiction meetings that would take place during the course of the planning process and the necessity for participation by certain essential stakeholders such as public works, emergency management, and urban planning. Lastly, the meeting included discussions about strategy ideas for public education and awareness, mapping, information gathering and dissemination, and greater collaboration and coordination with regional entities such as school districts and non-profits. The meeting's minutes, agenda, and presentation were put onto the web-portal for those committee members that were unable to attend the meeting.

During the weeks that followed this meeting, the consultant met with the participating jurisdiction individually to discuss their capabilities including technical, fiscal, and existing planning mechanisms. The consultant also collected the online surveys for hazard prioritization and ranked accordingly. After communicating the results with the City, these hazard rankings directed the consultant team on where to focus their risk assessment efforts.

The next Committee meeting was held March 15, 2012. During the event, the consultant team provided an overview of the results from the hazard identification and risk assessment that was performed for the high-priority hazards. Another objective of this meeting was to review the mitigation goals and strategies. The City's MAC agreed to support the countywide goals and objectives that were established as part of the AFC HMP 2010 Plan. The STAPLEE methodology which was to be used by the members to evaluate and prioritize their projects was also discussed. In addition, members reviewed the existing mitigation strategies and discussed new projects that will be added to the City Annex. Finally, the MAC discussed the public meeting that was scheduled for later that evening.

Draft sections of the plan were uploaded to the project's web-portal. Notices were sent to the hazard mitigation planning committee members requesting their review and comment by specified deadlines. After incorporating these revisions, a final draft of the plan was placed on the project web-portal for a complete review and approval by the committee members. Once approved, the planning team assembled the final plan for submission to the City of Alpharetta who in turn submitted it to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and FEMA for review and approval in June of 2012. The update took approximately 6 months to complete.

Documentation of these meetings in the form of agendas, sign-in sheets, and meeting minutes are on file in the City of Alpharetta office and are included in the Planning Process appendix.

4.7 Plan Review and Update Process

The following activities were done for the countywide plan update, while a parallel process was done for the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan review and update process resulted in a comprehensive update of the entire 2004 plan elements, which was achieved through a process that involved the following tasks, among others:

- Update of the Community Profiles to reflect changed demographics, economic characteristics, and growth and development trends.

- A detailed assessment of existing local mitigation actions and/or capabilities to carry out mitigation measures.
- A reassessment of risks to include detailed research and analysis of hazards affecting the communities, as well as adding man-made hazards to the Risk Assessment.
- A thorough update of critical facilities and assessment of vulnerabilities.
- A reexamination of development trends and exposure to risks.
- A review and recommitment to the vision for disaster-resistant communities; modifications to the 2004 goals; and support of the State goals for hazard mitigation.
- Identification and analysis of a comprehensive range of mitigation alternatives.
- A reprioritization of mitigation actions and projects.
- Revised mitigation action programs for each jurisdiction to better reflect the results of the plan update.
- Revisions to the plan maintenance procedures to institute streamlined amendments and better insure continuous monitoring and implementation of mitigation actions.