



# Chapter IX: Strategic Planning for Disaster Recovery

## Introduction

Disaster recovery planning and preparedness is no longer strictly for communities that regularly experience disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes. Communities across North America (and the globe) are experiencing unprecedented weather-related and manmade incidents that have significant and far-reaching impacts. Regardless of the cause, communities must plan for the inevitability that their community will be impacted by some incident that threatens their growth potential, quality of life, and even survival. This planning should allow for an all-hazards approach to allow for a wide range of consequences (everything from a natural disaster to hazardous material release to the closure of a major employer). This may also include preparing for impacts from a pandemic flu or a major cyber security attack. Each incident requires different strategies for recovery. The types of disasters and their effects can be reviewed in Chapter II, Disaster Overview.

Planning for post-disaster recovery can be a complicated, challenging, and controversial process. Yet, a community engaging in difficult conversations regarding redevelopment choices before a major disaster can help the community do their due diligence and consider major decisions wisely. These conversations greatly contribute to increasing the speed and success of economic recovery efforts within a community and helping local businesses rebound after a catastrophe. Not only will pre-disaster planning increase the speed of recovery, it can reduce the risk of another agency confusing the situation with roles pre-determined. Pre-disaster planning, as one can imagine, is easier to do than post-disaster planning where the disaster recovery triage takes over and post-disaster planning becomes difficult.



Community Relations Planning Meeting

Source: FEMA

Communities are often unprepared for the chaos that is likely to emerge after a disaster strikes, and have difficulty planning for long-term economic recovery when there are pressing humanitarian, cleanup and rebuilding needs to address. Still, a disaster-impacted community needs to develop a vision for how it will rebuild its devastated local economy. Communities also have an opportunity to “build back better” and use the tragedy of what the disaster brought to motivate the community to undertake needed changes. A post-disaster strategic (or recovery) plan provides the opportunity to re-evaluate recovery objectives in light of vulnerabilities to disaster, and establish strategies and action steps to make progress



toward long-term recovery. This may include the locating of target industries in or near vulnerable areas and the consideration of other important land-use and other infrastructure issues. These initiatives are often the core of a community (or regions) effort to build more economic resilience.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., 'shocks') to its economic base. Many definitions of economic resilience limit its focus on the ability to quickly recover from a disruption. However, in the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity.

Economic development organizations and chambers of commerce are uniquely positioned in the community to facilitate a strategic planning process for economic recovery - both before and after a disaster. Through their established connections with local businesses, they can coordinate involvement and leverage resources from the business community and are likely to take a leadership role in facilitating employment and business recovery. This chapter provides guidance to EDOs and business organizations in the strategic planning process for disaster preparedness and economic recovery to stabilize the community's economic base after a disaster.

Many existing planning efforts EDOs often already conduct could be readily adapted to incorporate these concepts and principles. Some examples include the completion of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, local redevelopment plans, land use plans, hazard mitigation plans, and community comprehensive plans. As important these topics are to include in the planning process, it is almost more important that they be integrated with other planning efforts. Without that critical step, they risk overburdening local capacity, diffusing the impact and relevance for stakeholders, and could become contradictory with the other plans.

## Pre-Disaster Planning

### Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan

A pre-disaster economic preparedness and/or redevelopment plan prepares a community for disaster situations with a focus on the business community and the local economy. The plan defines roles and lays out action steps that economic recovery stakeholders can take in the face of a disaster. Having a plan in place before a disaster enables a community to respond more quickly and efficiently in order to help jumpstart the recovery process and limit the disaster's negative impacts.

It is important to stress that the economic preparedness plan should work in conjunction with a larger, comprehensive community-planning framework led by the local government for a disaster situation. The plan should coordinate with issues such as land use, infrastructure, and housing. In addition, it should also complement the community's emergency management plan. A number of Florida communities are spearheading disaster-related comprehensive planning efforts in their own respective communities by



developing post-disaster redevelopment plans (PDRPs) with strong economic recovery components. Many of these pilot planning efforts have been funded in part by FEMA grants. The following section will reference these communities' planning efforts.

### Consider Coordination with the NDRF

In 2011, the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) was adopted to serve as a national framework that would provide a common understanding of roles, responsibilities, and resources available for effective recovery before and after a major disaster. The Economic Recovery Support Function (Economic RSF) of the NDRF focuses on the recovery of industry and business as well as the economic health of the impacted community. The NDRF lists key planning principles and discusses matters that have a bearing on local planning efforts. The National Disaster Recovery Framework: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation<sup>40</sup> can also be a resource for



community leaders, planners and stakeholders. It is important to note that the NDRF is a model for how the federal government organizes its recovery coordination efforts. Mirroring the NDRF structure can provide an advantage to interfacing and engaging federal agencies in the recovery process. Alternatively, the NDRF encourages states and communities examine their needs and develop the kind of coordination structure best suited for their capacity and needs.

An explanation of the NDRF and its six recovery support functions are explained in further detail in the *Disaster Overview and the Navigating the Federal Government* chapters.

### Factoring in Economic Resilience

At the regional or community level, economic development practitioners are instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and the lead grant administrator for federally-funded recovery initiatives. In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environment to include steady-state and responsive initiatives. Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident.

<sup>40</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency (2011). *National Disaster Recovery Framework: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation* [Guide], Washington, D. C. Retrieved from: <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/ndrf.pdf>



Some examples of *steady-state* economic resilience initiatives include:

- Engaging in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive involvement from the community to define and implement a collective vision for resilience that includes the integration and/or alignment of other planning efforts (e.g., hazard mitigation plans) and funding sources;
- Undertaking efforts to broaden the industrial base with diversification initiatives, such as targeting the development of emerging clusters or industries that (a) build on the region’s unique assets and competitive strengths; and (b) provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single cluster or industry;
- Adapting business retention and expansion programs (e.g., economic gardening or other enterprise supports) to assist firms with economic recovery post-disruption;
- Understanding resiliency best practices for key industries in the regional economy;
- Building a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries when their core employment is threatened through job-driven skills strategies and support organizations;
- Maintaining geographic information systems (GIS) that link with municipal business licenses, tax information, and other business establishment data bases to track local and regional “churn” and available development sites. GIS can also be integrated with hazard information to make rapid post-incident impact assessments.
- Promoting business continuity and preparedness (i.e., ensuring businesses understand their vulnerabilities (including supply chains) in the face of disruptions and are prepared to take actions to resume operations after an event); and
- Employing safe development practices in business districts and surrounding communities, such as locating structures outside of floodplains, preserving natural lands that act as buffers from storms, and protecting downtowns and other existing development from the impacts of extreme weather.

Some examples of *responsive* economic resilience initiatives include:

- Conducting pre-disaster recovery planning to outline key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and key actions;
- Establishing regular communication and monitoring of business community needs and issues (which can then be utilized after an incident);
- Establishing/utilizing a capability to contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordination impact assessment efforts; and
- Establishing/utilizing coordination mechanisms and leadership succession plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs.

## Action Steps

Planning for post-disaster situations - which involves making redevelopment choices - can be a challenging process. Yet, it is important to design a thoughtful process to engage community stakeholders in valuable discussions to better prepare the community. The steps listed below are suggested actions for the community to consider when starting a planning process for economic resiliency in the event of a disaster.

### Step 1: Identify a lead economic development organization to facilitate planning process.

Developing an economic preparedness plan is a lengthy process requiring input from a variety of stakeholders. This process should be led by an economic development organization, chamber of commerce or other business



organization that is a recognized authority on economic development matters by both the private and public sector. This organization will 1) galvanize wide-ranging support from all stakeholders, particularly the local business community, 2) help align the resources needed to get the planning process off the ground and 3) serves as an effective liaison and facilitator between all parties.

### **Step 2: Identify all economic recovery stakeholders and hold kickoff meeting.**

Identifying and building consensus among myriad stakeholders is one of the most important tasks in the planning process. Having engaged and committed stakeholders will likely result in a more comprehensive and actionable plan. When identifying and inviting various stakeholders, keep in mind:

- Representatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors as well as elected officials involved in local economic issues. This includes a wide variety of private sector representation from all your different industry sectors and business types in terms of size, function, etc.
- Regional and state representatives should also be invited and encouraged to participate as necessary
- Representation from industries that are economic drivers in the community will be important

Examples of the various types of organizations and individuals engaged as economic development stakeholders are provided in the textbox.

#### **Pinellas County, Florida**

##### **Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan**

Economic Development Stakeholders:

- Business Leaders
- Economic Development Director/Chair
- Convention and Visitors Bureau Director
- Planning Department Director
- Building and Development Review Services Director
- St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport Director
- Office of Management and Budget Director
- Representative(s) of the private sector (i.e., chambers of commerce, banking industry, tourism industry, Greater Tampa Bay Assoc. of Contingency Planners, etc.)
- Municipal Economic Development Staff
- Florida Council of 100
- Tampa Bay Partnership
- Worknet Pinellas
- Florida Trucking Association

#### **Step 2A: Create stakeholder groups.**

- Divide the stakeholders into subgroups that will focus on specific topics to be covered in the plan. Examples of economic recovery topics to be discussed are listed below.
- Hold a kickoff meeting where all stakeholders are made aware of the planning goals and objectives and process. It is important that they agree to work through the decision-making process.
- Evaluate what planning efforts have already been made by the stakeholders, and assess how resources can be leveraged or combined for maximum impact and efficiency.

#### **Step 2B: Establish clear goals and timeline(s) for the planning process.**

- Ensure that adequate time is given to the planning process. Establish a regular meeting schedule for subgroups and the group as a whole.



- Establish clear timeframes for each step. This will ensure that the process continues to move forward, keep the stakeholder groups on target, and inform the community of the group(s)' progress. It will also ensure that the lengthy planning process remains finite.

### **Step 3: Strategically evaluate how a disaster could affect the local economy.**

#### **Step 3A: Identify the community's economic assets.**

An inventory of current assets and economic drivers as well will help the community better understand the local economic dynamics as well as the resources to harness in the event of a disaster. Current information for this effort may be available in existing strategic plans and economic analysis. It will not only serve as the basis for the development of the economic recovery plan, but it can also be helpful in evaluating the impact of the disaster. The assessment should include a strong understanding of:

- Demographics
- Key industries and/or clusters
- Key employers and their location
- Labor and workforce characteristics
- Buildings and infrastructure of economic importance
- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis
- Current and future land-use and infrastructure development projects.
- Local policy framework (e.g., building codes, local and state incentives and regulations, environmental mitigation policy, etc.

#### **Step 3B: Perform an economic vulnerability analysis.**

An economic vulnerability analysis helps identify the risk factors for economic recovery as well as those businesses and geographic areas that are most vulnerable. The inventory developed in the previous step should be mapped against analysis from hazard mitigation and land-use plans to see what businesses, industries, or industry clusters are most vulnerable to disasters. This should also be used for decision-making on future land-uses and infrastructure development. Current local and regional employment in different industries/clusters, projected growth, earnings and wages, etc. should be studied as part of this analysis.

Many of the everyday challenges a community faces are exacerbated after a disaster. Therefore, analyzing current economic vulnerabilities in the community is an important component of the analysis. This analysis should include items like industry dynamics, workforce challenges, transportation and infrastructure issues, and other current concerns about economic growth in the community.

#### **Step 3C: Conduct scenario planning for community redevelopment.**

Not all disasters impact a community in the same way, so different types of responses and resources must be deployed to assist the recovery. Although a vulnerability analysis can help provide generalized information about a community's exposure to potential risk factors, scenario planning can help the community evaluate alternatives, such as redevelopment options, as well as impacts to various types of disasters.



Scenario planning, as the name suggests, allows communities to envision plausible futures based on an analysis of internal and external factors and their interactions. A community can then determine how different policies, programs, and resources can be put in place under different scenarios to effectively mitigate negative impacts while improving the chances of positive economic outcomes. This method has been adapted from military intelligence practices and is widely used for disaster planning by organizations both large and small.

Steps to scenario planning for disaster planning and preparedness include:

**Defining the context.** What kind of disaster(s) can the community face? Does it have programs, policies, and resources in place that will help the community with a speedy recovery in the face of a disaster? What are the gaps and challenges faced by the community should a major disaster occur in the near future? How prepared is the business community for a major disaster?

**Identifying the risk factors that can impact the community by leading the group through scenario exercises.** Will businesses permanently relocate to another community in the event of a major disaster? What is the local capacity to respond to local business needs? Are critical anchor businesses and other assets located in a vulnerable area? How will the image of the community be impacted by a major disaster?

**Asking stakeholders to identify what local community and economic assets are most vulnerable to these factors.** Engage stakeholders in a process to identify their community's economic vulnerabilities in light of different disaster scenarios. What happens to the local economy if an important economic anchor were to relocate out of the community?

**Developing a scenario framework of plausible futures** by combining the information and analysis from all the previous steps. Develop scenarios of what the community could do in terms of redevelopment or mitigation to protect these community and economic assets. What could be done to workforce programs, economic development programs, or permitting and licensing? This is part of a process for generating and evaluating the community's strategic options when it comes to redevelopment and economic recovery after a disaster. The graphic below summarizes the steps and questions that should be asked during scenario planning.



## Steps to Scenario Planning

### Step 1: Define the Context

- Where is the community on the path to sustainability?
- What is the principal concern?

### Step 2: Identify the External Forces

- What external forces (social, political, environmental, economic, and technological) are assumed to take place?
- What are the primary external uncertainties?

### Step 3: Evaluate Internal Dynamics

- How might local assets interact with external forces?
- What local assets are most sensitive to internal and external forces?

### Step 4: Identify Spectrum of Plausible Futures

- Where do external forces and internal dynamics meet?
- What storylines outline the array of possible futures?

Source: International Economic Development Council (2009, July). *The Climate Prosperity Handbook. Getting Started Guide: Climate Prosperity Strategies in Your Community.*

**Step 4: Develop action strategies and steps.**

Based on different scenarios and highlighted vulnerabilities in the community, an action plan with strategies, resources, responsible agencies, and suggested timelines should be developed. Amendments to existing disaster recovery and economic development plans may also be suggested for improved disaster preparedness. Both short- and long-term action strategies should be developed as part of the action plan.

Having an action plan that outlines key activities in the event of a disaster will increase efficiencies once a disaster strikes and help stakeholders make smart post-disaster recovery decisions. Palm Beach County, Florida's post-disaster redevelopment plan (PDRP) divides action strategies into short- and long-term, and pre- and post-disaster categories in order to provide all stakeholders with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Each action is accompanied by the following information: responsible group, issue/topic, disaster level, jurisdictions involved, approximate timeframe, and funding considerations.

It is also recommended that groups develop an implementation timeline that lists the steps that should be taken when and if a disaster occurs. This will ensure that the recovery process continues to move along once a disaster hits. Sarasota County, Florida's PDRP provides a timeline of various action steps during the different disaster stages (categorized into pre-disaster, emergency period, short-term recovery, and long-term recovery).

**Step 5: Develop a communications plan and compile contact information.**

Communication challenges are one of the primary issues that businesses and EDOs face during the economic recovery period. Physical disruptions to the telecommunications network and a high degree of uncertainty about future conditions are major causes of false rumors and misinformation.

A communications strategy will enable local and regional economic development organizations to remain in contact with their constituents, their peer organizations, and other groups that are critical to the community's economic recovery. When developing a communications plan, some key factors should be taken into consideration.

- A lead organization that will be responsible for ensuring the smooth flow of information to media outlets, businesses, and recovery agencies, should be identified.
- One of the most simple, and yet important, action steps is developing several contact lists that include local business owners, agencies playing a role in short-term recovery efforts, and key stakeholders throughout the region and state. The lead organization can use these lists to disseminate information immediately after the disaster as well as coordinate information gathering and economic analysis for short- and long-term recovery efforts.

**Step 6: Develop a list of possible funding sources.**

Potential funding sources for disaster recovery and redevelopment should be identified, including local, state, and federal sources. Although a variety of resources are available for humanitarian relief and housing, resources for business recovery can sometimes be scarce. It will be necessary for economic development organizations to creatively utilize available resources and leverage public and private funds.



### Step 7: Follow up with the plan.

Take the following steps to ensure that the economic preparedness plan is adopted by the community and that collaborations remain active.

#### Step 7A: Integrate the plan with other relevant plans.

Though the pre-disaster economic preparedness plan is part of the larger comprehensive disaster planning effort, it should also be linked with other community plans to reconcile inconsistencies. Additionally, it will enable the community to implement “a multifaceted planning program that is much more effective than the standalone plans.”<sup>41</sup> Local government leadership should adopt the plan to increase awareness and ensure implementation. For example, the Panama City PDRP evaluates multiple city and county plans that impact economic development activities in the community and provides recommendations on how each plan can integrate elements of the PDRP during future updates. The plan is available at: <http://www.pcgov.org/publications-3#TOC-Planning-Department>

#### Step 7B: Monitor, evaluate, and update the plan.

The economic preparedness plan should be revisited regularly, preferably on an annual basis. One of the greatest benefits of the planning process is the collaborations and relationships created among stakeholders. These connections should be fostered by convening stakeholders annually to evaluate and update the plan. The Palm Beach County, Florida PDRP calls for revisions and updates ahead of the annual hurricane season. In addition, major revisions and rewrites are conducted every five years.

## Post-Disaster Planning

Even if they have engaged in pre-disaster planning, communities invariably face chaos after a disaster. Planning for long-term recovery seems like a difficult task when there are pressing humanitarian, cleanup, and rebuilding needs to address in the immediate term.

Still, a disaster-impacted community needs to develop a vision for how it will rebuild its economy over the long haul. It takes time, leadership, and resources—all of which will be in short supply—to develop an economic recovery plan that has buy-in from community stakeholders.

A post-disaster strategic plan should be developed to guide the economic recovery process. The community has an opportunity to re-assess their economic objectives in light of disaster risks and other vulnerabilities. They can establish bold new strategies and action steps to make progress toward long-term recovery and emerge a more resilient community to future disruptions. Starting the process for long-range planning and economic recovery within three to six months following the disaster is recommended in order to take advantage of the urgency surrounding rebuilding efforts and the existing momentum within the community.

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<sup>41</sup> Panama City Planning Department (n.d.) [Webpage]. *The Panama City Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pcgov.org/publications-3#TOC-Planning-Department>



If a pre-disaster recovery plan already exists, it can provide a strong foundation upon which to build the post-disaster planning process. It may also provide guidance on organizations and resources that can be accessed for long-term recovery. Following a disaster, a community may be forced to discontinue planning efforts that were already underway in order to work on a new plan that addresses any dramatic changes to the local and regional economy.

### Case Study: Jefferson Parish Alters their Strategic Plan After Katrina

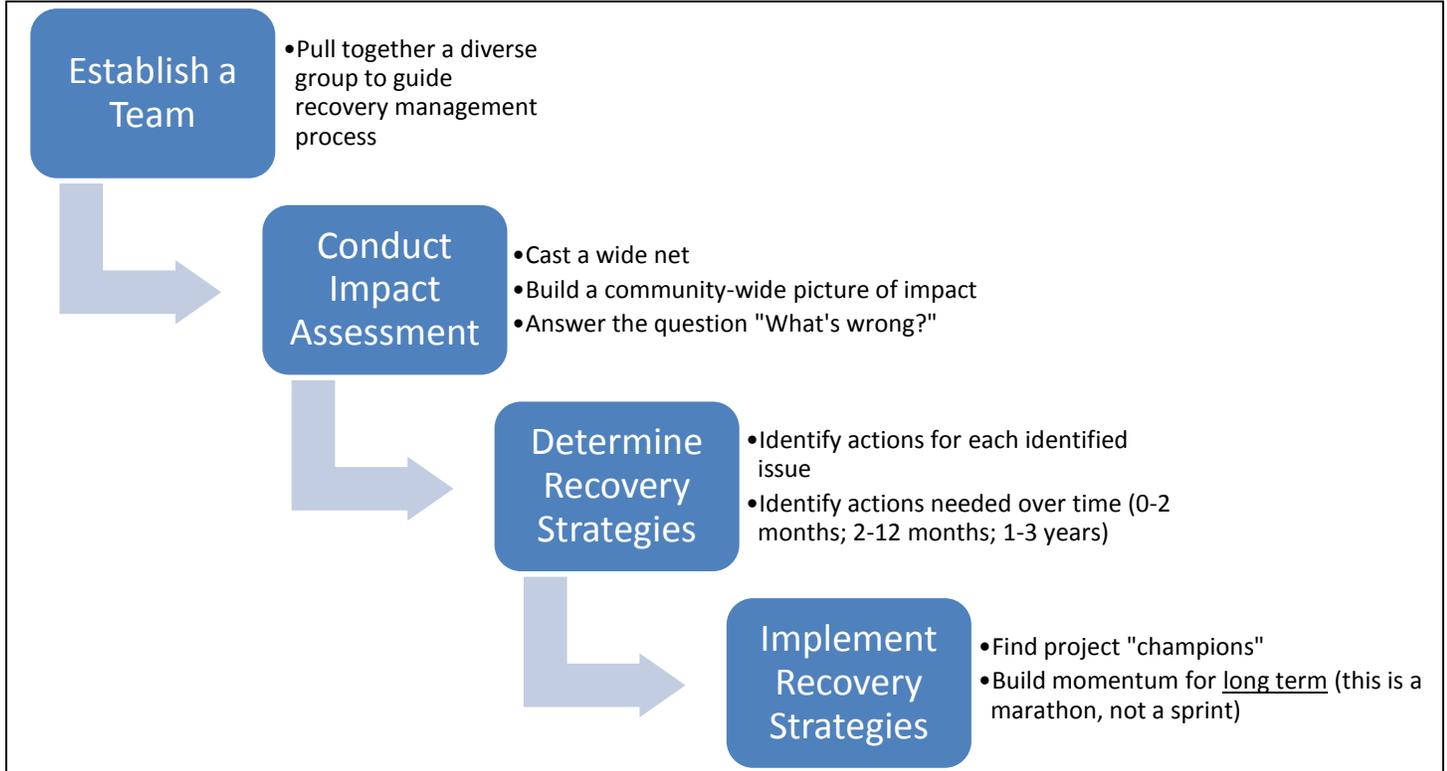
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) had only recently completed an update to its five-year plan, Jefferson EDGE 2010, when Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc along the Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf Coast. A community adjacent to New Orleans, Jefferson Parish received significant damage to its commercial and industrial space after Katrina and Rita. It was apparent that the effects of these hurricanes on the local and regional economies would be far reaching. Therefore, JEDCO decided to re-examine their economic development strategic plan only two months after the storm. They convened a meeting between their organization and the Jefferson Business Council and had a large amount of participation from the business community. They updated it with additional short- and long-term measures to support business recovery and long-range economic development, and the parish council quickly adopted the plan. The revised plan, The Jefferson EDGE 2010: Road to Recovery, was released by the end of 2005. The plan has since been replaced by a more recent strategic plan, but it is still available on the JEDCO website: [www.jedco.org](http://www.jedco.org).

Disasters can provide the catalyst needed to shake things up and force the community to reassess their economy in relation to the rest of the world. For example, Greensburg, Kansas, a small rural community that was decimated by a tornado in May 2007, decided to focus their rebuilding efforts on sustainable development. Their Long-Term Community Recovery Plan (LTCRP), released in August 2007, envisioned Greensburg as environmentally friendly and supported sustainable developments in the community.

Although planning in a post-disaster situation can be a daunting task, disaster-impacted communities must remember that they have the unique opportunity to rally recovery stakeholders and lead their economies in a new direction. The steps listed below are suggested actions for the community to consider when starting a process to develop a post-disaster economic recovery plan.

The process as a whole is summarized<sup>42</sup> in the figure below:

<sup>42</sup> While the process depicted suggests recovery planning is a sequential process, it cannot be understated that there is a need for flexibility and adaptability. In many cases issues identified during the impact assessment will highlight immediate unmet needs that require prompt action.



### Step 1: Conduct a post-disaster economic impact study.

The community should seek to perform an independent economic impact assessment immediately after a major disaster, even though FEMA will perform its own damage assessments. The study provides evidence for local decision-making and can support future requests for external assistance. This impact study should be conducted as quickly as possible following the disaster knowing that a detailed economic analysis will be completed at a later stage (as discussed in step 2D below).

An economic impact study assesses both physical damage (properties, inventory, etc.) and economic damage to industry and the local/regional economy. Communities that have performed this type of analysis indicate many challenges in acquiring both pre-disaster and post-disaster data. This is particularly true in the initially chaotic environment.

To the extent possible, the study should measure the following economic impacts (where data is available):

- Tax revenue loss (sales, property, employment),
- Job loss,
- Loss of wages,
- Business closures and interruption (loss of productivity),
- Economic recovery barriers and issues,
- Impacts to economic development investments,
- Damage to infrastructure,
- Damage to property (commercial, industrial, residential), and
- Damage to natural resources (that have an impact on local industries).



For more details on performing or using an economic impact study following a disaster, visit the economic impact assessment chapter.

### **Greensburg, Kansas, Long-Term Community Recovery Plan (LTCRP)**

Following the EF-5 tornado in May 2007, Greensburg was faced with the challenge of rebuilding its economy although its population of less than 1,400 was halved by the disaster. The tornado caused serious damage to 90 percent of the structures in the community. Though insurance companies paid substantial claims, most plans only covered the value of the buildings. Because of the aging building stock, substantial subsidies were necessary to rebuild.

The community undertook a detailed comprehensive planning process to develop the LTCRP. The plan recommended the creation of a Sustainable Development Resource Office, building all public facilities to LEED-Platinum level, and creating a Greensburg Green certification program. The plan emphasized that rebuilding Greensburg in a sustainable manner will not only reduce long term financial expenses but also create a tourism draw. By blending past tourist attractions with a sustainable living model, Greensburg hopes to attract an increasing number of tourists, lengthen stays, and create an economic driver.

The LTRP included an outline of action steps necessary for developing a comprehensive economic development plan. The recommendations include a SWOT analysis, an assessment of community assets, an evaluation of business sectors and leakage, strategies to benefit current small businesses, and an assessment of the need for a tourism director and an economic development director.

*For more information on Greensburg please see [Case Study Appendix 4](#)*

It will take creativity and partnering on behalf of the economic development organization to gather this impact data. As an example, Polk County's Office of Economic Development (OED) quickly reached out to the 13 chambers of commerce within their jurisdiction to participate on their economic recovery team after the county was struck by three hurricanes in 2004. The local chambers conducted business surveys and reported information back to OED to collect and aggregate. Without this partnership, OED would not be able to disseminate this valuable economic information back to local, state, and federal officials.

### **Step 2: Identify a lead economic development organization to initiate a post-disaster economic recovery planning process.**

One of the economic development organizations (EDOs) in the community should take the lead in initiating the economic recovery planning process with support and engagement from other businesses, local government, and community organizations. This process should begin within three to six months following a disaster. Some



communities have started this process even sooner to take advantage of the sense of urgency and unity after a disaster.

**Step 2A: Identify key economic stakeholders and hold a kickoff meeting.**

Champions of the recovery planning process should start by identifying all economic stakeholders, both local and regional, in the community. Engagement of a wide variety of private sector leaders representing various types of businesses is key. Refer to the pre-disaster section for a sample list of economic recovery stakeholders in a community.

The lead EDO should hold a kickoff meeting and invite key stakeholders and local government leaders. The EDO may want to co-host the meeting with another business organization. A professional facilitator should be considered to help develop an agenda and facilitate a productive meeting.

**Step 2B: Identify the roles and responsibilities of all economic recovery stakeholders.**

Identify roles and responsibilities among partner organizations for both short- and long-term recovery. Part of this process should include assessing the capacity and resources of each organization.

**Step 2C: Establish working groups to gather relevant data and information.**

Economic recovery working groups should be established to cover major topics like business retention, small business assistance, and downtown redevelopment. Each working group should have a chairperson and be responsible for compiling relevant data and identifying current issues for each topic. The groups will ultimately be responsible for recommending strategies and action steps to address those issues.

**Step 2D: Conduct an impact assessment.**

Economic impact information is often highly distributed among many different sources and takes many different forms. For example, the workforce development agency may have access to weekly unemployment data, the utility may have data on reductions in demand for impacted areas, the chamber of commerce may have a list of businesses they've surveyed with specific recovery issues, etc. The impact assessment can take a lot of leg work to engage the range of partners to begin painting a cohesive picture of how the community's been impacted. It is important to note that the impact assessment should NOT seek to derive a singular numeric cost of the incident. In conducting a post-disaster recovery strategy, these numbers tend to be generally useless and take a long time to derive.

Instead, an impact assessment should cast a wide net of economic recovery stakeholders to identify overarching trends, major issues and barriers, and unmet needs. This way future strategic planning and recovery assistance efforts can have an underlying basis for

Instead, an impact assessment should cast a wide net of economic recovery stakeholders to identify overarching trends, major issues and barriers, and unmet needs. This way future strategic planning and recovery assistance efforts can have an underlying basis for *why* they focused on certain areas or topics.



Also, it will offer a better understanding of competitive positioning and will ultimately lay the foundation of the community's long-term economic development strategy.

It may be beneficial to have a third party conduct this economic analysis, because of:

- Limited local capacity issues,
- The assurance of a speedy planning process, and
- The need for a fresh perspective.

As suggested in the pre-disaster planning section, it is worthwhile for the community to perform an economic vulnerability analysis. Using such resources as GIS, the community or regional planning organization can map economic data against analysis from hazard mitigation and land-use plans to see what businesses, industries or industry clusters are most vulnerable. This type of information would be helpful to local decision-makers and business leaders.



Coordinating Recovery Efforts. Source: FEMA

The following actions should be considered when undertaking the economic analysis.

- Review existing strategic plans and studies to determine the extent to which they need to be changed/updated to reflect the new realities on the ground.
- Evaluate existing business development targets and revisit economic issues faced by the community before the disaster. While certain economic issues could have exacerbated following the disaster, others might become irrelevant.
- Solicit information and input from the working groups as well as the community at large.
- Conduct focus groups around key topics to help identify specific challenges and opportunities for the community's long-term economic recovery.
- Hold an economic redevelopment charrette with various stakeholders (business leaders, various economic development groups, local government, citizens, etc.) to develop strategies for specific geographic areas like downtowns, industrial park(s), and the neighborhoods most impacted by the disaster.

It is important that all economic recovery stakeholders understand the findings of the economic analysis before any action steps are proposed or implemented. A deep understanding of the current situation, as well as the long-term vision for the community, will provide critical insight on how the community should move forward.

### Step 3: Create a plan with action strategies.

Information gathered through the impact assessment will serve as the basis for the development of the community's long-term economic recovery plan. With strong input from the private and public sectors, specific action strategies and tactics should be developed to provide direction on economic recovery priorities. While



the strategic plan should be updated every five years to reflect progress and adjust strategies, the action plan which outlines these tactics for the next one to two years should be regularly updated every year.

A phased approach to economic recovery where clear goals and objectives are set for the short-, medium-, and long-term should be developed. Emphasis should be placed on long-term goals, which could be 10 years, 20 years, or longer depending on the extent of damage. At the same time, strategies should be specific and include measurable outcomes to monitor progress and provide adequate guidance for the implementing agencies regarding what is expected.

Assign appropriate organizations to take ownership of and carry out each task. Ensure these organizations have the resources—in terms of in-house capacity, ability, and finances—to carry out the tasks.

### **Step 3A: Coordinate the action plan with the development of an effective communications strategy.**

Communication is always compromised in a post-disaster situation, but an effective economic development organization will seek to re-establish contact with businesses and quickly disseminate relevant information regarding available resources, critical issues, and community restoration and recovery efforts. The EDO will also use the media as an effective communication vehicle. The economic development organization should regularly promote to the public and media their planning efforts and share how resources, projects, and funds will be prioritized.

## **Additional Helpful Resources and Examples**

**Below is a list of resources and links where you can access more details and information on the topic.**

**Town of Lyons, Colorado, Recovery Action Plan (2014)** — Shortly after the flood waters hit Lyons, Colorado, hundreds of citizens engaged in the recovery planning process. Three months later, stakeholder created a recovery plan to address sectors such as economic and business development, infrastructure, and housing. In addition to charting the recovery process, this plan shows *how* the Lyons community developed a framework for recovery and resilience. It is available at:

<http://www.lyonsrecovery.com/uploads/8/3/4/9/8349039/lyonsrecoveryactionplan.pdf>

**Toward a Resilient Seattle: Post-Disaster Recovery Plan Framework (2013)**—Developed from community and stakeholder input, this framework outlines core planning priorities and lays a foundation for the next phase of Seattle’s recovery planning process. This resource is available at:

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency/publications/documents/SeattleDisasterRecoveryPlanFrameworkJan2013final.pdf>

**Grand Forks, ND’s Flood Disaster Recovery and Lessons Learned (2011)** – Prepared by the City of Grand Forks, ND and regularly updated every year since the 1997 floods, this material introduces you to the Grand Forks community, provides a brief overview of the 1997 flood and recovery process, introduces the strategies and



action steps deployed, and identifies lessons learned for the community. The document can be downloaded at: <http://www.grandforksgov.com/Reports/lessonslearned.pdf>

**City of Oakland Long-Term Disaster Recovery Plan (2010)**-- The plan serves as a model action plan for the City of Oakland and other cities and counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. Prepared by the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG), this plan covers eight issues identified by ABAG as critical to recovery: financing recovery issues, recovery of government facilities and services, long-term housing recovery, long-term recovery of business, long-term recovery of health care, schools and education, utilities and transportation, and land use change. Download the plan at:

<http://resilience.abag.ca.gov/wp-content/documents/resilience/toolkit/Oakland%20Long%20Term%20Disaster%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf>

**State Disaster Recovery Planning Guide (2012)**—Developed by the Coastal Hazards Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, this publication is intended to serve as an evaluative guidebook. The guide presents the how-tos in the planning processes and informative best practices. It also includes questions that encourage thorough reflection and assessment as well as suggested actions to target identified issues. This guide is available at:

[http://coastalhazardscenter.org/dev/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/State-Disaster-Recovery-Planning-Guide\\_2012.pdf](http://coastalhazardscenter.org/dev/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/State-Disaster-Recovery-Planning-Guide_2012.pdf)

**FEMA's Emergency Support Function #14's Long-Term Recovery Annex**—This document identifies and facilitates the use of recovery funding and provides technical assistance (such as impact analyses) for community recovery and recovery planning support. The document is available at: <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-esf-14.pdf>.

**Long-Term Community Recovery ToolBox (March 2012)** – FEMA funded the creation of this toolbox to assist local community leaders with communication, decision-making, identification and development of projects and the creation of funding strategies critical to long-term community recovery. The toolbox supports the work of local communities and recovery professionals involved with long-term disaster recovery. Download the toolbox at: <http://www.fema.gov/national-disaster-recovery-framework/community-recovery-management-toolkit>

**Community Economic Recovery Guidebook (2011)**—The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) developed this guidebook to assist economic development organizations, businesses and community leaders better prepare for post-disaster economic recovery. In addition to providing real situations and national best practices, this guide also connects disaster management functions with economic development principles to identify strategies and suggests action steps pre- and post-disaster. The guidebook is available for download at: [http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/resources/docs/CERG\\_11aug5%20FINAL.pdf](http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/resources/docs/CERG_11aug5%20FINAL.pdf)

**Policies for Guiding Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction**—This is a discussion on factors that should be considered as part of planning for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, including: enabling



legislations at the state and local level, economic recovery, hazard mitigation, and strategies that have worked in post-disaster recovery. Its section on economic recovery provides useful information on economic impact analysis as well as how to build a more resilient/sustainable economy. The paper is available at: [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/ltrc/fema\\_apa\\_ch3.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/ltrc/fema_apa_ch3.pdf)

**Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plans (PDRPs) in Florida** – These plans have been created to identify policies, operational strategies, and roles and responsibilities to guide decisions that affect long-term recovery and redevelopment of the community after a disaster. Issues include housing recovery, financial administration, environmental restoration, health and social services, and economic redevelopment. The following pilot communities initially developed the first set of plans: Hillsborough County, Manatee County, Nassau County, Panama City, Polk County, and Sarasota County. The state of Florida developed a guidebook to help communities prepare a PDRP:

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/Recovery/IndividualAssistance/pdredevelopmentplan/Index.htm>

**Post-Disaster Recovery Planning Forum: How-To Guide (2007)**—The Partnership for Disaster Resilience’s guide provides a process for communities to start pre-planning for catastrophic events by engaging partners in identifying the critical issues the community will face in a post-disaster environment. The guide is available for download at: [http://www.crew.org/sites/default/files/Post-Disaster-Recovery-Planning-Forum\\_UO-CSC.pdf](http://www.crew.org/sites/default/files/Post-Disaster-Recovery-Planning-Forum_UO-CSC.pdf).

**Regional Resilience: RUPRI Rural Futures Lab Research and Policy Brief (2012)** – This brief provides a framework for assessing current policy and practice related to regional resilience. It was prepared by the Rural Policy Research Institute’s (RUPRI) Rural Futures Lab at the request of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation and is available for download at:

<http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/RUPRI-Regional-Resilience-Research-Policy-Brief.pdf>

**Resilient Regions: Integrating Economic Development Strategies, Sustainability Principles and Hazard Mitigation Planning (2011)** —This report, published by the National Associations of Development Organizations, provides an in-depth look at the roles that regional planning and development organizations assume to help local and regional economies re-build after natural disasters. As such, it offers examples of regional economic recovery initiatives after the catastrophic events of 2008 in Iowa, Florida, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Wisconsin:

<http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/NADOResilientReport.pdf>

**Regional Disaster Resilience: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan (2011)** — Developed by The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP), this guide is a roadmap that outlines the step-by-step process to develop a cross-sector, multi-jurisdiction strategy to build capacity to deal with crises. The guide also addresses the challenges facing action plan implementation along with practical ways to organize, maintain, and sustain continued stakeholder collaboration and interest on a regional level. Access this roadmap here:

[http://www.tisp.org/tisp/file/Template\\_TISP%20Layout\\_v29\(2\).pdf](http://www.tisp.org/tisp/file/Template_TISP%20Layout_v29(2).pdf)