

## **1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS**

To develop this multi-jurisdictional mitigation plan, Sandusky County engaged in a comprehensive, whole community planning process. This process included direct participation from stakeholders and community members representing county, municipal, and township government and community organizations. This section describes the process utilized to develop the hazard mitigation plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were included throughout.

### **1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

Sandusky County's mitigation planning process began in June 2019 and concluding with the submission of a revised plan in April 17, 2020. The plan development process included five phases: pre-update planning, project kick off, risk and vulnerability assessment, mitigation strategy development, and final plan review.

#### **1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning**

Sandusky County's previous mitigation plan was set to expire on June 8, 2020. To seek funding for plan update process, the EMA Director submitted a grant application through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program in July 2019. The grant was awarded in May 2019 and Sandusky County initiated their planning process.

Resource Solutions Associates LLC was hired in June 2019 to facilitate the planning process. The EMA Director and Consultant met to develop a project timeline, review plan requirements, and identify references and resources for inclusion in the plan. The Consultant and EMA Director developed an initial contact list for the 2020 mitigation planning team; the list included jurisdiction officials and community leaders from across the county as well as EMA Directors from adjacent counties.

#### **1.1.2 Project Kick Off**

The planning team's formal work began with a countywide planning meeting on August 6, 2019; the meeting was held at Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services in Fremont. During the meeting, the EMA Director and Consultant provided an overview of the project, discussed the timeline, and explained the planning team's role. This meeting included participation from county officials, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and other key stakeholders. All participants completed an initial hazard assessment survey to begin identifying relevant hazards for Sandusky County and bridge to the next phase of the planning process.

#### **1.1.3 Risk and Vulnerability Assessment**

The risk and vulnerability assessment focused on research and information gathering. Jurisdiction-specific work sessions were conducted to identify local vulnerabilities and analyze the impact of incidents on each jurisdiction. The Consultant and EMA Director met with individual jurisdictions in September to discuss hazard vulnerability and critical infrastructure

protection needs. Participants provided input regarding critical assets and infrastructure, areas of specific or heightened vulnerability, and areas where mitigating actions would have a positive effect on future disaster loss in each jurisdiction. These discussions included vulnerabilities within the specific jurisdiction and Sandusky County as a whole. Participants included mayors, administrators, city/village council members, trustees, fiscal officers, road/street department employees, law enforcement officials, fire service personnel, public works and utility employees, and other key employees. Representatives from regional planning, natural resources, public health, education, and healthcare also participated in these sessions.

#### 1.1.4 Mitigation Strategy Development

Mitigation strategy sessions focused on developing mitigation goals and strategies for each jurisdiction. Participants utilized a standard worksheet to select, modify, and add strategies for their jurisdiction. Strategies were developed to address a broad range of needs, from those that can be included in a jurisdiction's local budget to strategies that would require grants or outside funding to execute. The strategies covered various types of activities ranging from structurally engineered projects to public information campaigns. Strategies that apply to specific groups, such as agriculture, natural resources, county and township infrastructure, and specific activities such as community development were discussed in both jurisdictional meetings and special interest group sessions.

#### 1.1.5 Final Plan Review

After the hazard identification and risk assessment and mitigation strategies were developed, the final draft plan was completed and the plan review process commenced. A countywide review meeting was held on March 10, 2020. This meeting was attended by representatives of jurisdictions, agencies and organizations across Sandusky County. At this meeting, the Consultant explained the plan's structure and organization and asked planning team members to review the plan and provide feedback during the public review period. The public review period was conducted from March 9 – 30, 2020.

Table 1-1 includes a complete list of planning team meetings and work sessions conducted throughout the planning process.

**Table 1-1: Planning Team Meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Participating Stakeholders</b>
08/06/2019	Sandusky County Job and Family Services	Project Kick Off/Initial Planning Meeting	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
09/03/2019	Sandusky County Commissioner's Office	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
09/03/2019	Fremont City Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Fremont
09/03/2019	Sandusky County Health Department	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
09/03/2019	Rice Township Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Rice Township

Date	Location	Purpose	Participating Stakeholders
09/04/2019	Gibsonburg Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Gibsonburg
09/04/2019	Sandusky County EMA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
09/05/2019	Woodville Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Woodville Woodville Township
09/05/2019	Bellevue City Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Bellevue
09/11/2019	Clyde Municipal Building	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Clyde
09/18/2019	Sandusky County Engineer's Office	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
09/19/2020	Lindsey Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Lindsey
09/19/2019	Helena Volunteer Fire Department	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Helena Fire, Risingsun Fire, Scott Township
09/15/2019	Ballville Township Hall	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Ballville Township
12/02/2019	Burgoon Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Burgoon
12/09/2019	Sandusky County Health Department	Strategy Development	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
12/09/2019	Fremont City Hall	Strategy Development	Fremont
12/09/2019	Greek Creek Township Hall	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Green Creek Township
12/09/2019	Green Springs Village Hall	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Green Springs
12/10/2019	Sandusky County Engineer's Office	Strategy Development	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
12/10/2019	Woodville Village Hall	Strategy Development	Woodville, Woodville Township
12/11/2019	Lindsey Village Hall	Strategy Development	Lindsey
12/11/2019	Gibsonburg Village Hall	Strategy Development	Gibsonburg
12/11/2019	Sandusky County EMA	Strategy Development	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
12/11/2019	Clyde Municipal Building	Strategy Development	Clyde
12/12/2019	Bellevue City Hall	Strategy Development	Bellevue
12/12/2019	Sandusky County Commissioner's Office	Strategy Development	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>
12/13/2019	Helena Village Hall	Strategy Development	Helena
12/16/2019	Rice Township Hall	Strategy Development	Rice Township
12/17/2019	Sandusky Township Hall	Hazard Identification and Strategy Development	Sandusky Township
03/10/2020	Sandusky County Job and Family Services	Final Plan Review	<b>Countywide Meeting</b>

## **1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

To encourage countywide participation in the mitigation plan, a broad group of stakeholders were invited to participate in the planning process. Invitations were extended to more than 100 individuals representing partners across Sandusky County, including:

- Incorporated jurisdictions (county, city, village officials)
- Township representatives (trustees, fiscal officers)
- Specialized disciplines, including floodplain management, fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, education, nonprofits, and social service agencies
- Elected and appointed officials, including the county commissioners, auditor, treasurer, engineer, and regional planning
- Economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and tourism bureaus
- Emergency management officials from adjacent counties (Ottawa, Erie, Huron, Seneca, and Wood Counties)
- Non-government agencies and community action groups
- Special interest groups such as watershed coalitions, conservancy districts, federal partners, and state agencies with facilities in the county
- Residents, businesses, and the general public

More than 115 people contributed to the planning process. A complete list of participating stakeholders is provided in Appendix A: Mitigation Planning Team. This participation occurred over the four phases of plan development described in section 1.1. When scheduling meetings and work sessions, the EMA considered the scheduling needs of stakeholders. Many sessions were held in jurisdictions and at locations across Sandusky County that were convenient for attendees. Email was the primary communication used to invite stakeholders. When email was not effective, the EMA reached out to jurisdictions and partners via phone or in-person to share meeting information.

### **1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation**

All incorporated jurisdictions in Sandusky County elected to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. Bellevue and Green Springs are border communities that are located in more than one county; both communities elected to participate in the hazard mitigation plan for Sandusky County.

The officials identified in Table 1-2 served as the primary representative and point of contact for their jurisdiction. The EMA coordinated with these individuals to schedule work sessions.

**Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdictions and Primary Representatives**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Position/Title</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<b>COUNTY</b>		
Sandusky County	County Administrator	Theresa Garcia
<b>MUNICIPALITIES</b>		
Bellevue	Safety Service Director	Mike Lantz
Burgoon	Mayor	Donald Messersmith
Clyde	City Manager	Paul Fiser
Fremont	Safety Service Director	Kenneth Frost
Gibsonburg	Village Administrator	Marc Glotzbecker
Green Springs	Village Administrator	Josh Miller
Helena	Mayor	Connie Carnicom
Lindsey	Village Administrator	Jerry Neff
Woodville	Village Administrator	Keith Kruse

### 1.2.2 Public Participation

In addition to jurisdiction representatives and community partners, the public was also included in the mitigation planning process. The project kick off meeting and final plan review process were announced to the public via news releases. Jurisdiction representatives were encouraged to invite additional employees, partners, and community members to participate and promote the sessions to their community by sharing the information on websites, social media accounts, and others available means.

When the draft plan was complete, a public review period was conducted from March 9-30, 2020. During this time, the plan was posted on the Consultant's website and accessible to all stakeholders, planning team members, and the community. A printed copy of the plan was available at the EMA. The public was notified of the review period through emails to planning team participants, letters to jurisdictions, and a news release to local media outlets. All notifications included a link to view the plan online, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments and questions. Jurisdictions were encouraged to share plan review information on their websites and social media accounts.

As part of the public review process, a countywide plan review forum was held on March 10, 2020. This forum was open to all jurisdictions, planning team participants, and the general public. The forum provided stakeholders with the opportunity to view and comment on the plan and discuss multi-jurisdictional implementation of the identified mitigation strategies.

All comments received from the public review period and plan review forum were reviewed by the EMA Director and Consultant. As appropriate, revisions were incorporated into the plan. After final revisions, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA for state review before submission to FEMA for federal approval. Following federal approval, the formal adoption process began. That process is explained in section 4.0 Plan Adoption.

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

Many information sources were utilized as this plan was developed. Research included formal plans, document, and databases as well as extensive discussions with stakeholders, subject matter experts, and community leaders to obtain information specific to Sandusky County. The county profile is based on demographic data and local information provided by community partners. Hazard definitions and history information were taken from the National Weather Service; hazard histories are current through November 2019, the most recent data available. The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis are based on multiple information sources, including HAZUS reports, Ohio EMA information, and FEMA data. The table below identifies the references, reports, and studies utilized in plan development.

**Table 1-3: Studies, Reports, and References**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Author/Agency</b>	<b>Date</b>
American Fact Finder	US Census Bureau	2020
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2020
HAZUS Earthquake and Flood data	Ohio EMA	2012
Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019
Sandusky County Hazard Mitigation Plan	Sandusky County EMA	2015
Sandusky County Profile	Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research	2018
Sandusky County, Ohio Agricultural Benchmarks Report	Sandusky County	2019
Sandusky County, Ohio Socioeconomic and Demographic Benchmarks Report	Sandusky County	2019
Storm Events Database	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2018
US Census	US Census Bureau	2020

### **1.4 PLAN MAINTENANCE**

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan and encourages the inclusion of hazard mitigation considerations into ongoing community development activities, engages stakeholders in issues related to disaster risk reduction on a regular basis, and streamlines the mitigation plan update process.

#### **1.4.1 Annual Plan Maintenance Activities**

Upon approval of this plan, Sandusky County will transition into plan maintenance. The planning team will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, beginning approximately one year after the final approval of the plan. Because participation in meetings can be a challenge, the EMA will identify the method to conduct this review based on stakeholder needs. Methods can include, but are not limited to, traditional meetings, digital or paper surveys, conference calls, and webinars. The intent of annual plan maintenance is to track progress on mitigation goals and strategies and document changes in hazards and risks.

The specific method used to collect this information is less important than the actual collection of feedback.

If the county is impacted by an actual disaster incident, the EMA will also consider a post-incident mitigation meeting to capture any specific mitigation needs and document changes for the next plan update. The EMA Director will also review the hazard identification and risk assessment and note necessary changes for the next plan update.

#### **1.4.2 Community Participation**

In Sandusky County, the EMA is responsible for coordinating mitigation plan maintenance but stakeholder and community participation are critical. The EMA will continue reaching out to a broad group of community partners and encouraging their participation in ongoing mitigation activities.

To encourage participation from the community, all mitigation review meetings and activities will be open to the public. These events will be promoted through news releases, websites, social media posts, and other appropriate communication methods. Any digital surveys or data collection tools will be made available to the community. Feedback received from all participants will be reviewed by the EMA Director and documentation maintained.

#### **1.4.3 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms**

Across the county, multiple organizations work together to promote community and economic development. These agencies will also support and encourage implementation of the identified hazard mitigation strategies.

The Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission provides planning services, zoning consultation, and floodplain management for the county. The commission collaborates with townships and municipalities across Sandusky County to update and maintain zoning codes. The planning commission is also charged with updating and maintaining the county's comprehensive plan.

The Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation is the primary agency that works to develop businesses in the county through recruitment and placement of new companies and expansion of existing businesses. Along with the Chamber of Commerce and government officials, they work to foster business growth and development in the county.

The EMA Director works with these organizations and officials across the county to assess disaster risk, prepare for all types of hazards, and implement and monitor hazard mitigation actions.

#### **1.4.4 Documentation of Plan Maintenance**

The EMA will maintain documentation of all plan maintenance activities. This documentation will include attendance records, contact information for stakeholders and planning team members, surveys, progress reports, and disaster damage information submitted by

jurisdictions and community partners. This information will be shared with the planning team during the next plan update process.

#### **1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle**

The Sandusky County Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2025. With ongoing plan maintenance activities, the county will be positioned to submit an updated plan before the identified expiration date. To ensure the appropriate timeline is met, formal efforts to update the plan will begin no later than mid-2023. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.