

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CED S)

SECTION F. Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency Strategy

To help frame the discussion, we will start with 3 basic definitions per the Nebraska Emergency Management Act RRS Section 81-829.36 to 81-829.75 which can be found at:

<http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-emergency-management-act.pdf>

(1) Disaster means any event or the imminent threat thereof causing widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or manmade cause;

(2) Emergency means any event or the imminent threat thereof causing serious damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or manmade cause which, in the determination of the Governor or the principal executive officer of a local government, requires immediate action to accomplish the purposes of the Emergency Management Act and to effectively respond to the event or threat of the event;

(3) Emergency management means the preparation for and the carrying out of all emergency functions, other than functions for which military forces are primarily responsible, to mitigate, prevent, minimize, respond to, and recover from injury and damage resulting from disasters, emergencies, or civil defense emergencies. Emergency management functions include, but need not be limited to, firefighting services, police services, medical and health services, search and rescue services, engineering services, communications and warning systems, radiological preparedness, hazardous materials response, evacuation of persons from stricken areas, emergency welfare services, emergency transportation services, restoration of public utility services, and other functions related to civilian protection, together with all other activities necessary or incidental to the preparation for and carrying out of the functions listed in this subdivision. **81-829.39**

And a 4th definition per the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Mitigation Directorate:

(4) "Mitigation" is the cornerstone of emergency management. Mitigation focuses on breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. Mitigation lessens the impact disaster have on people's lives and property through damage prevention, appropriate development standards, and affordable flood insurance. Through measures such as avoiding building in damage-prone area,

stringent building codes, and floodplain management regulations, the impact on lives and communities is lessened.

In the event of a disaster, and in conjunction with its regional partners, SENDD is prepared to facilitate planning and recovery efforts as outlined in the following strategy. However, this brief strategy is in no way intended to undermine or replace existing federal, state or local disaster plans. This document simply establishes SENDD's role in both pre- and post-disaster planning and recovery.

PHASE I: PRE-DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

SENDD supports and encourages its communities to:

- Engage in pre-disaster recovery and mitigation planning.
- Regularly assess the community's risks and vulnerabilities.
- Inventory and organize the community's recovery resources.
- Engage in business continuity planning.
- Ensure resources are available for the elderly and those with special needs.
- Identify staging and shelter locations.
- Identify recovery partners, as well as the type of assistance and resources they can provide.
- Establish a timeline for recovery activities (immediate, short-term, intermediate and long-term).
- Develop and disseminate a community evacuation plan.
- Establish a communication chain.
- Engage the community's residents in the planning and recovery process.

REGIONAL RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

Southeast Nebraska is at risk for a wide variety of disasters including, but not limited to: fires, flooding, dam failure, drought and extreme heat, severe winter storms, earthquakes, hazardous material spills, chemical/biological warfare, vector-borne diseases and terrorism.

The region is vulnerable to these disasters, and recovery and mitigation efforts are faced with many challenges, due to the following factors:

- Geographic size and location.
- A small population dispersed over a large area.
- Isolation of many communities and residents.
- High rate of poverty.
- Limited financial capital.
- Lack of economic diversity.
- Existence of significant energy and transportation corridors.
- Limited rural transportation infrastructure and options.

RECOVERY AND MITIGATION PLANNING

Without being prepared for the complexity of redevelopment following a major disaster, local officials may struggle with recovery decisions and miss opportunities for public participation in reshaping the community's future. To become more disaster-resilient, local governments should plan for what must happen after rescue and recovery operations are completed in order to return the community to pre-disaster condition and/or make it stronger. Through developing and implementing a **Long Term**

Community Recovery Plan (LTCR), local governments work with residents to create a long-term recovery and redevelopment strategy in pursuit of a more resilient community.

Long Term Community Recovery Plans identify policies and operational strategies, as well as roles and responsibilities for implementation, which will guide decisions affecting long-term recovery and redevelopment of the community following a disaster. These plans emphasize proactive hazard mitigation and community improvement that is consistent with the goals of local and regional comprehensive plans and has full participation from the area's residents.

There are three principal benefits to having a well-developed LTCR Plan:

- 1. Faster and More Efficient Recovery:** Without a comprehensive, long-term recovery plan, efforts in the aftermath of a significant disaster will delay the return of community stability. Creating a process to make appropriate and informed post-disaster decisions enables a community to do more than react, prompting post-disaster action rather than time-consuming debate. Identifying appropriate planning mechanisms, financial assistance and agency roles and responsibilities beforehand ensures a community will begin the road to recovery more quickly. Additionally, being able to show efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars after a disaster is important for the public's perception of the recovery.
- 2. Opportunity to Build Back Better:** A disaster, while tragic, can also create opportunities to fix past mistakes and/or move forward with plans for community improvements. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, local officials are under significant pressure to restore the community to its pre-disaster condition. Without a guiding vision, short-term decisions may inadvertently restrict long-term redevelopment and overlook opportunities to increase the resiliency of the community. A LTCR Plan strengthens the recovery process, and communities benefit from assessing their risk levels and crafting a proactive long-term redevelopment plan. Local officials and the public can thoughtfully analyze and debate issues, linking redevelopment goals with other important community plans. Careful thought and planning achieves outcomes that will ensure future community-resiliency more than those decisions made under emergency circumstances, compromised budgets and political pressures.
- 3. Local Control over Recovery:** Developing a LTCR Plan provides local government officials, residents and businesses the opportunity to determine long-term redevelopment goals and develop policies and procedures that will guide redevelopment before well-intended outside agencies and non-government organizations rush to aid the community. While outside resources are critical in a major or catastrophic disaster, a locally developed LTCR Plan will best channel those resources to effectively meet the community's specific needs and goals. Additionally, it will show outside agencies and donors that the community is prepared to play an active role in the recovery process and promote its capabilities to wisely use donated and loaned resources. There will always be rules and, occasionally, "strings" attached to external sources of funding, but a community that has researched the allowable uses of federal and state assistance can better work within those parameters in an effort to fund projects that further local and regional redevelopment goals.

Many disasters do not confine themselves to jurisdictional boundaries. Displaced residents, compromised infrastructure, changes in economic conditions, hazardous materials contamination and degradation of sensitive environments are some of the impacts that can affect an entire region after a major disaster. When recovery is slow, neighboring communities also experience these impacts for an extended period of time. A LTCR is designed to be used in any disaster, regardless of type, as long as the damage will require long-term redevelopment efforts. It is an all-hazards plan addressing disasters identified in each county's emergency and/or disasters plan. As the regional economic development organization serving Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer and York Counties, SENDD will respond accordingly, utilizing the resources and information outlined in the region's CEDS document. Therefore, counties are encouraged to incorporate LTCR strategies into their disaster planning documents.

DISASTER PHASES AND REDEVELOPMENT

Disaster management is typically viewed as a cycle with overlapping phases: 1) pre-disaster mitigation and emergency management preparedness; 2) emergency response; 3) short-term recovery; and 4) long-term recovery and redevelopment.

- 1. Pre-Disaster Phase – Mitigation and recovery planning** occur during the pre-disaster phase (unless a community is struck by a disaster before planning is complete). Once a mitigation and recovery plan is adopted, preparatory activities should be implemented on an on-going basis during normal operations, which are sometimes referred to as "blue skies." Plans should be tested prior to a disaster event, so that all stakeholders with a post-disaster implementation role are familiar with their responsibilities.
- 2. Emergency Response Phase – Emergency response activities** are specifically addressed in the local government's emergency and/or disasters plan and include immediate actions to save lives, protect property and meet basic human needs. This is the shortest phase of the cycle, typically only lasting a few days in minor disaster conditions.
- 3. Short-Term Recovery Phase** – The role of any plan during the short-term recovery phase is to begin organizing for long-term redevelopment activities and guiding short-term recovery decisions that may have long-term implications (e.g., placement of temporary housing or debris sites). A recovery plan can provide direction for transitioning to long-term redevelopment during this phase. The short-term recovery phase begins as the emergency response phase is winding down and will continue until critical services are restored. The duration of the short-term recovery phase depends on the severity of the disaster and the level of community preparedness.
- 4. Long-Term Recovery and Redevelopment Phase** – A recovery plan is used most during this phase. Long-term recovery and redevelopment includes efforts to reconstruct and enhance the built environment, as well as recover the economy, environment and social systems. This phase begins as short-term recovery activities are accomplished and can last

from a couple years for a minor disaster to five or more years for a major or catastrophic disaster.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER PLANS

The objective of this Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency Strategy is to guide the redevelopment decision-making process following a disaster in a manner consistent with local comprehensive plans, such as Emergency Management Plans, Pre-disaster Mitigation Plans and other relevant plans or land development regulations. Each of these plans, and potentially others, has pre-existing policies or procedures that affect Long Term Community Recovery. For instance, local comprehensive plans include many policies that determine where and to what extent redevelopment can occur. Ultimately, SENDD will help its counties and communities access the information and resources necessary for making Long Term Community Recovery decisions.

Southeastern Nebraska Disaster and Emergency Services Contact Information

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PHASE II: POST-DISASTER PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Disaster Assessment

In the days and weeks following a disaster, SENDD will be available to assist counties and communities:

- Assess the nature and magnitude of the disaster.
- Assess the impact on both local and regional economies (business, industry sectors, labor market, etc.).
- Assess the impact on transportation and public infrastructure.
- Assess the impact on housing, schools and health care facilities.

Develop and/or Implement Recovery Timeline

Based on the results of the disaster assessment, SENDD will help regional partners and community leaders move forward with:

- Listing and prioritizing recovery activities to be performed.
- Identifying resources (federal, state, local and private sector) needed for each activity.
- Determining the level and type of assistance needed.
- Identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Determining the timeframe for each recovery activity (immediate, short-term, intermediate or long-term).
- Establishing recovery benchmarks.

Implementing the Recovery Plan

In order to accomplish recovery activities quantified as part of long-term recovery, SENDD is capable of:

- Identifying business, economic and entrepreneurial rebuilding initiatives.

- Identifying and utilizing workforce initiatives to employ workers and rebuild the local economy.
- Applying for and administering funds from federal, state and local programs.
- Developing management plans to ensure the most effective use of funds.

Prioritizing Areas to Focus Redevelopment

Limited time, funds and materials are going to make simultaneous redevelopment of all damaged areas difficult. Communities may want to encourage redevelopment in areas that correspond to their vision for the future and those less vulnerable to disasters by prioritizing and incentivizing development in these areas. The best way to build disaster resiliency is to direct future development to safe locations, while minimizing or mitigating highly vulnerable types of development in hazardous areas. After a disaster, targeted redevelopment areas can provide immediate opportunities for redevelopment since they will have sustained less damage and can be prioritized for infrastructure restoration and expedited permitting. Allowing for rapid redevelopment in safe areas intended for increased future development will minimize vulnerable redevelopment and/or allow time to plan the reconstruction of areas severely impacted by the disaster. Designated priority recovery and redevelopment areas can also be used to locate temporary post-disaster facilities more efficiently that are consistent with future land uses.

Historic Preservation and Restoration

The loss of historic resources due to a disaster can have a major impact on the community. Some losses may be unavoidable, but others could occur accidentally during recovery operations if procedures are not in place to watch for these concerns. Historic structures are particularly vulnerable to damage due to their age and repair of these structures must meet certain requirements to maintain their character and historic designation. There may also be funding opportunities before or after a disaster for implementing mitigation measures to prevent further damage to historic resources. Engaging state and local historic preservation organizations in the planning and implementation process can ensure that the unique considerations involved with preserving and restoring historic structures and archeological sites are included in a community's recovery plan.

Reducing Disaster Vulnerability through Land Use and Development Regulations

The best practice for Long Term Community Recovery is to restrict rebuilding in hazardous locations and require mitigation where vulnerable redevelopment cannot be precluded. While this plan of action would ensure optimal community resiliency to disasters, it may be very difficult to achieve and may not be a good choice for the first action to be tackled when implementing any recovery plan. However, with careful consideration of the legal implications concerning property rights and extensive public outreach, there are many regulatory tools for increasing disaster resiliency that may be a possibility for the region, especially if pursued during the post-disaster "window of opportunity" for future reductions in disaster vulnerability.

Potential regulatory methods could include reduced intensity or density of use, special permit requirements, increased setbacks from hazard sources (e.g., a waterway or building, etc.), hazard-specific site design requirements and/or increased structural mitigation requirements. These methods could be implemented through policies instituting lower damage thresholds requiring nonconforming uses/structures to meet current standards (in certain zones or throughout the jurisdiction), zoning overlay

districts, post-disaster specific land development codes and/or special assessment districts to fund mitigation projects that benefit more than one property.

Economic Development

The ability of a local economy to rebound after a disaster dictates the success of the community's long-term recovery. The return of jobs, tourism, capital investments and other indicators of economic health are dependent upon housing recovery, infrastructure restoration, environmental restoration and social service provision. The involvement of the private sector in the post-disaster planning process is imperative for determining the priorities and actions that will be beneficial to restoring the local economy. Consideration must be given to the different obstacles that could potentially hinder economic recovery, such as those that small businesses will face, decisions large employers will have to make about whether to relocate, opportunities for diversification of the economic base and job training and workforce recruitment needed to meet altered market conditions after a major disaster.

Resumption and Retention of Major Employers

Rapid resumption of existing major employers is critical to a community's economic recovery after a disaster, especially as employment provides a reason for most residents to return and rebuild quickly. Typically, major employers will have business continuity plans and will not need the basic disaster preparedness education that is necessary for smaller businesses. These companies are often able to work with local governments as partners in planning for Long Term Community Recovery and provide insight as to what government assistance they will need to ensure rapid resumption. Major employers may also have the means to assist in actions to support workforce retention if included in the planning process. While large company recovery assistance will vary, typically businesses located in hazardous areas or older structures may need assistance to reopen or relocate, temporarily or permanently, within the area.

If businesses do not feel a sense of connection to the community or fear that recovery will not be successful there is a chance that they will relocate their company elsewhere after a disaster. This is especially the case for corporate headquarters and industries that are not location-dependent or whose location choice is tied to quality of life factors. Mitigation and recovery plans provide the private sector with confidence in the community's ability to continue providing the market environment necessary for conducting business. Some factors that may aid the retention of major employers include a high level of communication before and after a disaster about Long Term Community Recovery goals and expectations and/or incentives to ensure retention, if necessary.

Small Business Assistance

A small business is often perceived as a family-owned business that provides services solely to the local community. Small businesses comprise the majority of businesses in SENDD region. Small businesses are more likely than large businesses to not reopen after a major disaster or fail shortly after reopening. Several factors may be involved in these failures, including the extent of damage to a community, timing of reopening and lack of financial reserves.

Short periods without cash flow can be damaging, and small businesses often find restrictions and loan arrangements overwhelming. The SENDD Business Loan Officer will be available to guide businesses through the redevelopment process. SENDD also has micro-lending programs that may be available to businesses during Long Term Community Recovery. Loans are typically based on the pre-event business and tax returns of the firm and require extensive collateralization. Post-disaster market changes, however, may mean the company isn't able to do as well as it did pre-disaster, and the loan, even at below-market interest rates, sometimes becomes a burden to the long-term survivability of the business.

Workforce Retention

While trying to retain existing businesses, efforts must also address retaining the workforce that supports those businesses. Actions such as ensuring that schools reopen and childcare is available, allowing temporary on-site housing for employees and communication of a community's post-disaster plan can assist in getting employees back to jobs as soon as the businesses have reopened.

After a disaster, the market for certain businesses may decrease or be eliminated due to financial troubles or customer demand changes. However, other industries may provide employment opportunities, such as the construction industry, which will boom temporarily due to rebuilding needs. Workforce training programs are important to provide residents with appropriate skill sets to fill newly available positions due to recovery efforts and to adjust workforce skills to other industries that may take a more permanent hold in the community due to post-disaster business recruitment efforts. Providing locals with first preference for temporary recovery work is important for keeping workers from moving out of the area.

Physical Economic Redevelopment Projects

In some circumstances, opportunities may arise after a disaster to move forward with planned physical economic development projects or to create new projects that take advantage of post-disaster funding, available land or public will. Economic development projects that are disaster-resilient and fill a need in the community after a disaster should be a priority for post-disaster funding. In addition, the community can prioritize projects that incorporate energy efficiency and other sustainable building design considerations. Business districts can be prime locations to focus Long Term Community Recovery projects since these districts offer financial tools or incentives, such as tax increment financing, reductions on impact fees and state tax incentives. Economic leaders can also consider ways to expand these business districts and leverage funding that would be available through disaster programs from several federal agencies, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and Economic Development Administration (EDA) disaster assistance program.

Opportunities to Sustainably Restore Economic Vitality

Retaining existing businesses is the first priority after a disaster; however, Long Term Community Recovery Planning may also present an opportunity for businesses to assess their long-term applicability in the local market and take advantage of any changes in demographics or business incentives that may occur due to disaster impacts and an influx in outside funding to the area. For instance, a business that was already struggling before the disaster may need to rethink its business plan and use the disaster

as an entrepreneurial impetus unless it happens to be engaged in one of the few economic activities that benefit from a disaster, such as the development industry.

Inevitably, some large and small businesses that bear the brunt of significant damage or indirect losses are going to fail or choose to relocate after a major disaster. This can affect the unemployment rate of the county if new businesses do not replace those that relocate. Ideally, a community would have economic diversity so that if one industry sector is severely impacted by a disaster, the majority of the workforce will not be affected.

Unfortunately, the SENDD region struggles with a lack of economic diversity, which means that in the event of a disaster the loss of one business could mean the loss of all the local benefits provided by that employer/industry. Efforts to diversify the local economy with industries that are less vulnerable to disasters should be integrated into ongoing economic development activities. Industries targeted for attraction and incentive programs after a disaster should be those that will provide a more disaster-resilient and diversified economy for the community and are appropriate for the post-disaster circumstances.

Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Restoration of infrastructure and critical public facilities after a disaster is a prerequisite for recovery – one that is addressed by local government and private utility and infrastructure companies' emergency response and short-term recovery plans. There are long-term redevelopment considerations for infrastructure restoration, however, that must be weighed in conjunction with land use, environment, housing and economic redevelopment issues.

Taking advantage of opportunities to upgrade, mitigate or even relocate infrastructure or public facilities after a disaster is critical. Advanced planning allows a community to make deliberate decisions about redevelopment that it may otherwise have had less opportunity to do during the post-disaster rush to rebuild. Decisions about infrastructure reconstruction will influence private redevelopment decisions, and using disaster repairs as an opportunity to include hazard mitigation allows a local government to lead by example.

There are many agencies, jurisdictions, and stakeholders involved in providing infrastructure, public facilities and utility services. Before and after a disaster, these private and public entities need to establish communication and coordination procedures to ensure that long-term recovery and redevelopment occurs in an efficient and organized manner. Each agency or company should have its own recovery plan; however, if any opportunities for directing redevelopment are to be pursued then coordination and communication are critical.

Types of Infrastructure and Public Facilities to Address in Long Term Community Recovery Planning

A community's infrastructure is made up of a number of different systems and structures, each of which should be considered carefully:

- Transportation systems – The repair of roads, bridges, railroads, airports and public transit is essential to establishing normal operations within a community. The repair of these and other types of infrastructure is often necessary for other redevelopment efforts to take place. Long Term Community Recovery Planning can be used as an opportunity to modify, improve and add to existing transportation networks. Incorporating hazard mitigation into the repair and reconstruction of transportation facilities can ensure that when disaster strikes again, the infrastructure is better able to handle the impacts.
- Potable water, sewer and storm water systems – Damage to potable water, sewer and storm water infrastructure can weaken a community’s ability to recover. Like with other infrastructure, the community can take the opportunity to include hazard mitigation or other improvements during repairs. In cases of severe damage to infrastructure in highly hazardous locations, relocation could be considered. These opportunities may be missed if pre-planning is not conducted.
- Power, natural gas and telecommunications – Recovery from a disaster cannot begin until major utilities, especially electricity, are restored.
- Public facilities – Rebuilding after a disaster provides an opportunity to mitigate future hazard impacts and build back a more resilient community. Public facilities, such as schools, libraries and government offices must be rebuilt to current building codes. However, above-code hazard mitigation may also be a good investment, and post-disaster funding sources may allow these expenditures. Some public facilities in highly hazardous areas could potentially be targeted for relocation during pre-disaster planning.
- Parks and recreation facilities – While parks and recreation facilities are typically not a priority for recovery, they are important for regaining quality of life as part of long-term redevelopment. Park properties also are often used in staging recovery efforts, such as temporary vegetative debris storage.

Financing Infrastructure and Public Facilities Repair

When a community starts to make decisions about which structures to relocate after a disaster or which mitigation projects it should invest in pre-disaster, they should consider funding availability. Knowing where to prioritize spending requires some basic knowledge of what is covered under insurance policies, which projects will be eligible for federal reimbursement through the Public Assistance Program, which projects can be funded through grant programs and what financial reserves can be targeted for grant matching funds or local investment. When a community begins to address its infrastructure issues as part of the initial planning process or as a pre-disaster implementation action, it can launch an assessment of county or municipal insurance policies to determine which facilities are covered and for what extent of damage. They can then use this assessment to make decisions about increasing coverage or financing repairs to uninsured structures. They can also determine whether mitigation enhancements would be covered under current policies and Public Assistance or whether additional funding would be needed.

Public Assistance: Improved and Alternate Projects

Occasionally an Applicant may determine that improvements should be made while restoring a damaged facility, or that the public would not be best served by restoring a damaged facility or its function at all. FEMA refers to these projects respectively as improved and alternate. All requests for these projects must be approved prior to construction.

Possible Alternate Projects

- Repair or expansion of other public facilities;
- Construction of new public facilities;
- Purchase of capital equipment; and
- Funding of hazard mitigation measures in the area affected by the disaster.

Possible Improved Projects

- Relocation of public facilities;
- Using improved materials;
- Expanding capacity, and
- Rebuilding to higher codes and standards

Conclusion

In the event of a disaster, SENDD is committed to:

- Providing local officials, business leaders and other community partners with access to regional demographic, economic and hazard vulnerability data
- Developing technical expertise and economic analysis tools for conducting initial disaster assessments and long-term economic impact analysis
- Establishing collaborative relationships with local government officials and non-government organizations that may provide data, funding, technical expertise and other resources essential to intermediate and long-term economic recovery following a disaster event