Executive Summary

**Purpose**
The Hazard Mitigation Plan establishes practices for integrating safety into existing government mechanisms and developing capital projects that will prevent the loss of life and damage to property.

The intention of this plan is to serve as a blueprint for coordinating and implementing hazard mitigation policies, programs, and projects. It provides a list of mitigation goals, objectives, and related actions that may assist St. Clair County in reducing risk and preventing loss from threats and/or future hazard events. The impacts of hazards and/or threats can be lessened and sometimes avoided altogether if appropriate actions are taken before events occur. By avoiding unnecessary exposure to known hazard risks, communities will save lives and property and minimize the social, economic, and environmental disruptions that commonly follow hazard events. St. Clair County and its municipalities agree that hazard mitigation makes sense. Through the identification of vulnerable areas and the implementation of measures aimed at minimizing exposure, the negative impacts of hazards may be reduced for St. Clair County.

**Philosophy**
The St. Clair County Hazard Mitigation Plan is created to minimize losses to existing and future structures within hazard areas and manage safety in conjunction with other functional planning documents. In doing so, this will help St. Clair County become more sustainable and disaster resistant through selecting the most appropriate mitigation measures. This plan looks at past occurrences, master plans, and mitigation actions for mitigating future disasters and incidents.

Some sections of the community are vulnerable to flooding, possible tornadoes and high wind, severe storms and lightning, wildfire, and other hazards. Working through the cycle of hazard mitigation can help ensure that vulnerabilities will not increase. Encouraging acquisition, relocation, or retrofitting of existing vulnerable structures, along with the protection of valuable natural resources, can minimize damages and help ensure that our community is resilient and even stronger than before.

Communities face significant challenges during post-disaster redevelopment in balancing the driving need for rapid recovery with implementing long-term hazard mitigation. The necessity to meet basic needs and resettle displaced populations immediately following a disaster often overshadows the more abstract, longer-term sustainability considerations. Once full-scale reconstruction is initiated, it is difficult to modify projects in progress to meet sustainability objectives. This trend highlights the need for pre-disaster mitigation planning that incorporates principles of sustainable development within the context of reconstruction, so that communities can more easily rebuild in a manner that will make them less vulnerable to future hazard events while improving the quality of life.

**Development History**
The Plan is a comprehensive study of the hazards that have impacted St. Clair County in the past, as well as those that have the potential to occur in the future.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan is specifically written to satisfy the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000), which is the latest legislation to improve the hazard planning process (Public Law 106–390). By adopting the plan, St. Clair County will remain eligible for various federally funded hazard mitigation grant opportunities for five years. DMA 2000 reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur and establishes a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program and new requirements for the national post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). It identifies new requirements that allow HMGP funds to be utilized for planning activities and amplifies the amount of HMGP funding available to states that have developed a
comprehensive mitigation plan prior to a disaster. States and communities are required to have an approved mitigation plan in position prior to receiving post-disaster HMGP funds. Local and tribal mitigation plans must demonstrate that their proposed mitigation measures are based on a sound planning process that accounts for the risk to and the capabilities of the overall community.

This all-Hazard Mitigation Plan for St. Clair County, Michigan (the plan) was prepared with input from county residents, responsible local officials, and with the support of the Michigan State Police – Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The process to develop the plan included nearly a year of coordination with representatives from numerous jurisdictions and other organizations in the county. The plan will guide the county toward greater disaster resistance in harmony with the character and needs of the community.

It is imperative that local decision makers become and stay involved in this planning process to provide new ideas and insight for future updates to the Hazard Mitigation Plan for St. Clair County. Now that a mitigation strategy has been developed and updated, it will remain a challenge and a goal for St. Clair County to provide necessary updates as mitigation techniques are implemented.

It will remain imperative that all local agencies, units of government, non-profit organizations, businesses and industries, and private citizens continue their involvement and dedication to hazard mitigation.

It is our long-term goal that the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the strategies identified will be fully integrated into daily decisions and routines.

**Concepts in Hazard Mitigation Planning**

Hazard mitigation is sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and their property from hazards. Hazard mitigation planning is the process State, Tribal, and local governments use to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and to develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property from future hazard events. Mitigation planning includes the following elements:

- **Public Involvement** – Planning creates a way to solicit and consider input from diverse interests. Involving stakeholders is essential to building community-wide support for the plan. In addition to emergency managers, the planning process involves other government agencies (e.g. zoning, floodplain management, public works, community and economic development), businesses, civic groups, environmental groups, and schools.
- **Risk Assessment** – Mitigation plans identify natural hazards and risks based on history, estimate the potential frequency and magnitude of disasters, and assess the potential losses of life and property. The assessment considers the built environment, including the type and numbers of existing and future buildings, infrastructure, and critical facilities located in or near identified hazard areas.
- **Mitigation Strategy** – based on the risk assessment, communities develop mitigation goals and objectives, as part of a strategy for mitigating disaster losses. The strategy is a community’s approach for implementing mitigation activities that are cost-effective, technically feasible, and environmentally sound as well as allowing strategic investment of limited resources.

**Benefits of Mitigation Planning**

- Mitigation creates safer communities by reducing loss of life and property
- Mitigation enables individuals and communities to recover more rapidly from disasters
- Mitigation lessens the financial impact of disasters on individuals, the Treasury, State, local and Tribal communities.
• Increases public awareness and understanding of vulnerabilities as well as support for specific actions to reduce losses from future natural disasters.
• Builds partnerships with diverse stakeholders, thereby maximizing opportunities to leverage data and resources, which can help reduce workloads and achieve shared community objectives. For example, managing floodplain development may not only reduce flood losses, but also protect water quality by restoring natural functions.
• Expands understanding of potential risk reduction measures to include structural and regulatory tools, where available, such as ordinances and building codes. Implementation of local floodplain ordinances prevents an estimated flood damages annually.
• Informs development, prioritization, and implementation of mitigation projects. Benefits accrue over the life of the project as losses are avoided from each subsequent hazard event.

**Mitigations Value to Society**

• Mitigation creates safer communities by reducing loss of life and property
• Mitigation enables individuals and communities to recover more rapidly from disasters
• Mitigation lessens the financial impact of disasters on individuals, the Treasury, State, local and Tribal communities.

At times, community expectations may be too great for the government to meet or unrealistic to achieve, irrespective of the level of community engagement undertaken. It is important to understand that generally there is no government decision that will please everyone, especially if that issue is emotive, complex, or controversial. However, best efforts must be made to consider community concerns and ideas.

Source: [www.dpac.gov](http://www.dpac.gov)