

Town of New Paltz Climate Smart Planning

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Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool is a checklist to identify gaps in a community's planning process.

The Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool was used to evaluate opportunities for the Town of New Paltz to improve its community's resilience to flooding and climate change. The Planning Tool reviews many long- and short- term aspects of storm and climate change preparedness by reviewing Town and County planning documents, activities and management. Documents were reviewed, and municipal staff members were consulted in the process of completing the assessment. The assessment and recommendations have been shared through discussions at Climate Smart Communities Task Force meetings and meetings with select Town officials.

Municipal staff engaged in the Town of New Paltz Climate Smart Planning assessment:

Neil Bettz, Town Supervisor

Stacy Delarede, Building Inspector

Amanda Gotto, Climate Smart Communities Task Force Project Manager

Chris Marx, Highway Superintendent

Janelle Peotter, Climate Smart Communities Task Force Coordinator

Kathy Preston, Assistant to the Supervisor

The completed assessment and recommendations highlight areas of opportunity for the Town of New Paltz to integrate flood and climate change preparedness into its municipal operations and planning.

Areas of Strength

- The Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- The Town has an Open Space Plan that provides recommendations for protecting natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.
- The Town has several environmental and climate related documents including a Farmland Preservation Plan, a Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory, and a Climate

Change Vulnerability Assessment and Future Predictions document that help to discern the impact of climate change on the community.

- The Town has several joint Town-Village documents and initiatives (including a joint Town-Village Climate Smart Task Force) that help to provide a coordinated approach to becoming more resilient to climate change and other environmental concerns.
- The Town relays weather threats to the public via multiple forms of communication (phone call, social media, etc.).
- The Town is a Climate Smart Community.

Areas of Opportunity

- The Town of New Paltz adopted the Ulster County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which makes the community eligible to receive FEMA grants such as the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program for completion of hazard mitigation actions. Note that beginning later in 2020 the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program will be replaced by the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.
- Participate in The Nature Conservancy Community Resilience Building Workshop¹, which helps community participants identify hazards, challenges, strengths, and priority actions for community resilience.
- Seek out training opportunities for municipal staff related to floodplain and emergency management issues such as the FEMA Emergency Management Institute's course on the Community Rating System, Advanced Floodplain Management Courses, and similar trainings available on the National Emergency Training Center campus.
- The Town of New Paltz can leverage completion of this Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool for points toward Climate Smart Communities certification. **CSC PE7 Action: Climate Smart Resiliency Planning (6 pts.)**. For more information on the Climate Smart Communities Program and the actions listed in this document, visit the Climate Smart Communities portal.²

Recommendations

The following opportunities emerged under each of the sections of the Climate Smart Planning assessment:

¹ The Nature Conservancy Community Resilience Building Workshop (CRB): www.communityresiliencebuilding.com/crbworkshopguide

² Climate Smart Communities Portal: <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>

Section 2- Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

- Encourage relevant Town employees to take trainings on the use of available risk (like FEMA’s HAZUS-MH) and vulnerability (like flood insurance rate maps and cumulative risk assessments) tools. Many of these trainings are offered through the FEMA Emergency Management Institute.³ Use these to report estimated future financial losses from natural hazards.
- Consider creating maps, including maps of populations (especially vulnerable populations) and building stock, in relation to hazards such as flood zones.
- Take the existing build-out analysis for the Town and overlay it with risk areas such as the Special Flood Hazard Area on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).
- Utilize work being conducted by Wood Hole Research Center to help incorporate estimates of future financial losses resulting from flooding into plans.

Section 3- Public Outreach and Engagement

- Consider installing high water mark signs at visible public locations. Include kiosks or educational signage to explain flooding issues and potential future conditions in Town.
- Publicize the availability of floodplain information to insurance agents, real estate agents, lenders, and the community. Encourage them to attend the “Floodplain Management for Real Estate Professionals Course” offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County and the Ulster County Department of the Environment. Contact Ulster County Board of Realtors for training dates.
- Inform residents about available disaster resources through municipal website links, television, radio, social media, etc. **CSC PE9 Action: Social Media (3pts).** Resources could include:
 - ASPCA’s disaster preparedness steps for domesticated animals⁴
 - FEMA’s “Are You Ready” guide⁵
 - FEMA’s Homeowner’s Guide to Retrofitting⁶
 - Provide residents with guidance on the development of personal and family evacuation plans or what to include in emergency or evacuation kits (FEMA’s Ready.gov checklist).
- Consider developing a public outreach plan focused on climate outreach and engagement **CSC PE9 Action: Climate Change Education and Engagement (4-8 pts.).**

³ FEMA Emergency Management Institute: <https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx>

⁴ ASPCA’s Disaster Preparedness for Domesticated Animals: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness>

⁵ FEMA’s “Are You Ready” Guide: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/7877>

⁶ FEMA’s Homeowner’s Guide to Retrofitting: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/480>

- Hold a climate change education event at a local function or festival, such as the Earth Day Fair, to inform the public about climate change, its effects on the Town, and efforts that the Town is taking to make the community more resilient.

Section 4- Integration of Municipal Plans

- When the Town Comprehensive Plan is updated, be sure to include sustainability elements within it **CSC PE6 Action: Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements (3-21 pts).**
 - Reference and incorporate components of any relevant plans (e.g. Open Space Plan, etc.).
 - Explain the support and involvement of emergency managers and public works officials.
 - Explicitly mention and incorporate resilience within the plan’s mission, vision, and goals.
 - Link recommendations to reducing hazard vulnerability through land-use planning.
 - Emphasize non-structural pre-disaster mitigation measures, such as acquiring flood-prone lands.
 - Consider including strategies that determine whether to relocate structures that repeatedly flood, including identifying an equitable approach for community involvement in decision-making and potential funding sources.
 - Be sure that it cross-references the County’s multijurisdictional hazard mitigation plan.
- Consider creating a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) and access funding through the NYS Department of State.⁷
- Consider adopting the Association of Floodplain Managers No Adverse Impact concepts.⁸
- Consider creating a plan combining elements of a capital improvements plan and economic development plan. **CSC PE8 Action: Green Economic Development Plans (4 pts).** The plan could:
 - Include a licensed professional planner and engineer in the planning process.
 - Consider the risk of flooding when upgrading existing municipal infrastructure and on proposed infrastructure projects.
 - Incorporate projections of flooding into risk assessments over the expected service life of municipal infrastructure.
 - Incorporate existing plans, studies, reports and technical information.

⁷ NYS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program: <https://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html>

⁸ Association of State Floodplains No Adverse Impact: <https://www.floods.org/index.asp?menuID=349&firstlevelmenuID=187&siteID=1>

- Identify economic vulnerabilities due to hazards.
- Incorporate climate change effects into its assessments of economic vulnerabilities.

Section 5- Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

- Consider participating in the National Weather Service Storm Ready Community program⁹, which helps communities take a proactive approach to prepare for extreme weather and natural disasters.
- Inform the public of the NY-Alert¹⁰ program and how to sign up.
- Participate in FEMA’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)¹¹ training to better prepare for disasters.
- Create a Heat Emergency Plan **CSC PE7 Action: Heat Emergency Plan (6 pts.)**. Be sure to identify cooling center locations (ex: libraries, firehouses, community centers) where vulnerable populations can go.
- Create a formal evacuation plan with routes out of known hazard areas.
- Develop a Long Term Recovery Plan that provides guidelines on steps the community will take to reestablish a pre-disaster condition or better, and enable the community to sustain itself.

Section 6- Hazard Mitigation Implementation

- Complete a Climate Action Plan **CSC PE2 Action: Community Climate Action Plan (16 pts.)** and include at least one Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction target. The basic steps to complete a climate action plan (CAP)¹² are as follows:
 - Determine Leadership and CAP framework.
 - Develop communication and engagement strategy.
 - Complete and analyze baseline assessments.
 - Identify goals and GHG reduction targets.
 - Identify existing and potential incentives.
 - Prioritize incentives.
 - Create a plan for implementing the chosen incentives.
 - Establish metrics.
 - Write the CAP, adopt it, and make it publicly available.

⁹ National Weather Service Storm Ready Community Program: <https://www.weather.gov/StormReady>

¹⁰ NY-Alert is a New York State service that alerts citizens of hazards and emergencies via email or telephone. <https://nyalert.gov/>

¹¹ CERT program is offered by FEMA to train volunteers in basic response skills to assist in community disaster relief.

<https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>

¹² Climate Smart Communities Climate Action Planning Guide: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/csccapguide2014.pdf

- Provide training on NYSDEC Post Flood Stream Intervention training for highway department personnel and other appropriate staff.¹³
- Engage in wetland or riparian buffer restoration and protection by **CSC PE7 Actions: Restoration of Floodplains and Riparian Buffers (1-10 pts)**
 - Support land-acquisition programs to purchase land in hazard-prone areas.
 - Encourage sustainable enhanced methods of streambank and riparian area protection encouraged through incentives or regulation.
 - Establish special area ordinances for habitat preservation.
 - Implement impact fees to pay for restoration and protection efforts.
 - Develop a plan to control invasive species.
- Consider using federal grant programs such as the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, FEMA pre-disaster Mitigation Grant Program, FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, and FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program to implement mitigation projects.

Potential Funding Sources

- DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant Program: <https://cwconline.org/fhmi-program-overview/https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/109181.html>
- DEC Grant Applications: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/grants.html>
- DEC Hudson River Estuary Program Grants: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5091.html>
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program: <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program>
- FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation Grant Program: <https://www.fema.gov/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-program>
- FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities>
- FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program: <https://www.fema.gov/flood-mitigation-assistance-grant-program>
- HUD Community Development Block Grants: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs
- NYC Department of Environmental Protection Funded Voluntary Buyout Program: https://www.cwconline.org/linked/flood_mitigation_programs_an_overview.pdf
- NYS Department of State Grants (including Local Waterfront Revitalization Program): <https://www.dos.ny.gov/funding/>
- NYS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (direct link to LWRP): <https://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/lwrp.html>

¹³ NYSDEC Post Flood Stream Intervention Trainings: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/86450.html>