

TOOL DESCRIPTION



A Community-Based Social Marketing Approach to Promoting Safe Growth in Coastal Communities: Messaging Tool for Planners

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Planning for Peak Economic Performance

Think about your community as a living system with many interdependencies, and that in order to function at peak performance, all of its elements need to work together toward the common goal of a vibrant, healthy, and productive community. It is this interdependent nature that can prompt cascading failures following disasters, which often lead to a community in crisis. By integrating hazard mitigation into your comprehensive planning efforts, your community can avoid a crisis situation. Not only will your community become more resilient but it will attract new investment in smarter development—spurring economic growth and helping your community reach its peak economic performance.

Use this messaging tool to help you better communicate the true value and benefits of comprehensive planning with your elected officials. As a planner, your job is to build economic advantages, quality services, sound structures, and healthy environments into your community—not just avoid risks. In other words, we all need to build communities that can perform in the face of coastal risks.

Target Audience: Elected Officials

Acting as key gatekeepers, elected officials often present hurdles when you propose actions to mitigate coastal hazards. Elected officials serve relatively short terms and might not see the benefit of longer term planning. Moreover, many officials believe that all development is good development since it will generate jobs. And if the community restricts development in any way, then growth will be stifled and jobs will be lost. These are difficult barriers to overcome, but the messages below should help you make a strong case that the community doesn't have to choose between mitigation and economic growth.

Messaging Themes

By looking at hazard mitigation efforts as an essential component to a community's economic development strategy, communities can achieve peak economic performance. Every step to make your community resilient against coastal hazards allows for positive, predictable performance, which will attract investors and stimulate economic growth.

- **Performance:** Comprehensive planning can drive commerce and economic performance by keeping businesses open, people working, and dollars flowing.
- **Partnership:** Community resiliency depends upon a strong public-private partnership where business owners, developers, community planners, and the public work together to reduce a community's vulnerability.
- **Predictability:** Smart investors look for *predictability*. Your community's comprehensive planning activities will demonstrate that you're proactively managing coastal risks and minimizing potential economic losses or disruptions.

Key Messages

- For every dollar we spend on mitigation, we can expect to see a high rate of return. [*One recent study¹ showed that communities can expect to save \$4 or more per dollar spent on mitigation activities.*]
- By investing in projects that reduce the amount of time that our local businesses' doors are closed, we keep revenue flowing into our hometown—revenue needed for essential services, such as police, fire, and medical support. [*A recent study¹ showed that mitigation projects with this focus have the largest return on investment.*]
- Our entire community benefits by investing in hazard mitigation efforts—stores and banks will be open, kids will be at school, and our residents will be back at work with minimal disruption.
- We can provide our community with economic advantages and our residents with a predictable quality of life by limiting economic losses and minimizing disruptions in their daily lives.
- Our hazard mitigation efforts will show investors and developers that we have reliable infrastructure in place to keep our local businesses connected to their supply chains, workforce, banking, and utilities. We can weather any event!

Peak Economic Performance in Action: Local Examples

Freeport, New York, used a two-year FEMA mitigation grant as an opportunity to become more resilient and stimulate the local economy at the same time. In partnership with the private sector, new restaurants and other shops that cater to tourism were developed at the same time as the city revitalized its infrastructure by raising the elevation of a major road and moving electrical wires underground.

Hilo, Hawaii, transformed an area where a school and local businesses were once at risk of tsunami events to create a museum and surrounding park. The Pacific Tsunami Museum

¹ Multihazard Mitigation Council (MMC). 2005. "Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings of Mitigation Activities." Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Building Sciences.

promotes economic development through tourism and educates the public on tsunamis. The museum now serves as a living memorial to those who lost their lives in past tsunami events.

Thurston County, Washington, wanted to limit development outside the 100 year floodplain and protect critical wetland habitat. Even in the face of increasing development pressures, the elected officials and planners found that partnering with local businesses during the planning process proved successful. When planning was done “*with*” the local businesses, as opposed to “*for them*” or worse, “*to them,*” the end result produced mitigation projects and regulations that generated little adverse impact on economic development while using the best available science.