



Section 1.0

Introduction

This document provides guidance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Sustainability Planner in the post-disaster response and recovery process. State emergency management officials, local jurisdictions, and other FEMA staff may also use it as a reference during nondisaster time.

What is the role of the Sustainability Planner?

The Sustainability Planner acts as a catalyst for sustainability and promotes a sustainable redevelopment component into the overall reconstruction effort. The Sustainability Planner evaluates opportunities for implementing sustainable redevelopment, presents these findings, and helps to build consensus on the appropriate level of effort to be pursued by FEMA, other Federal agencies (OFAs), state and local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The clients of Sustainability Planners are the affected local jurisdictions in the disaster declaration area. The client may be an incorporated village, town, or city; in some disasters, a sustainability initiative may involve townships, counties, or even regional or multijurisdictional levels of government. In essence, the Sustainability Planner is an advocate for these communities and helps them identify opportunities for building a disaster-resistant and sustainable future.

The Sustainability Planner facilitates and supports community-based planning initiatives; he or she does not dictate solutions. Like hazard mitigation, sustainability is ultimately a local responsibility and prerogative. The Sustainability Planner presents

information on opportunities, resources, and potential technical assistance; the community determines what will work best.

As the sustainability mission statement implies, the effectiveness of a Sustainability Planner has as much to do with people skills as with technical planning knowledge. Section 2 provides valuable suggestions on networking with the Disaster Field Office (DFO) staff, government officials, and the

Post-Disaster Sustainability Mission Statement: To promote and facilitate sustainable redevelopment at the local level by integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into the broader goals of the post-disaster recovery process. This is accomplished in partnership with the state and in coordination with OFAs, local agencies, and NGOs.

general public. Communities will be more willing to accept the concepts of sustainable redevelopment if they receive a well thought-out message and are made to feel part of the process. The Sustainability Planner should be perceived as an advocate for the community's long-term recovery needs, not as someone who is promoting a Federal initiative. The Sustainability Planner must be able to place issues within the citizen's reach—move issues out of the abstract, and present them as tangible and practical alternatives. Understanding community needs and future vision is central to creating an opportunity for sustainability.

The goal of the sustainability initiative is to reduce the potential for disaster losses and to help communities realize opportunities to implement sustainable redevelopment during the recovery process. Although the goals and responsibilities of the Sustainability Planner are in many ways similar to FEMA's overall hazard mitigation goal, it is necessary to draw some distinctions. The Sustainability Planner focuses on developing comprehensive, long-term planning solutions and identifying opportunities to incorporate sustainable and livable community objectives. The mitigation specialist focuses on specific structural or nonstructural mitigation measures, such as buy-out or elevation of structures, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) compliance, building code enforcement, flood protection measures, and seismic and wind retrofit. The Sustainability Planner is more involved with comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision regulations, and watershed and basin planning initiatives. The Sustainability Planner and the mitigation specialist are partners in building more disaster-resistant and sustainable communities, and their respective areas of emphasis complement each other.

FEMA's sustainability initiative began formally in November 1998 when the Associate Director for Mitigation encouraged Regional Directors to set up a sustainable redevelopment function in DFOs (see Appendix I). The Associate Director proposed the establishment of a *sustainability desk* as part of the mitigation function in DFOs and/or Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs). Two pilot efforts were undertaken in Ohio

To achieve the goals of the sustainability mission statement, the primary responsibilities of the Sustainability Planner are to:

- Provide the disaster-affected community with information, contacts, resources, and technical assistance on the principles and practices of sustainable redevelopment through DFO operations.
- Publicize sustainable redevelopment during the critical window of opportunity to introduce new approaches to disaster recovery.
- Challenge the disaster recovery team to identify new opportunities to implement sustainable redevelopment during the early recovery phase of operations.
- Obtain useful information and lessons learned that will contribute to the development of policy and procedures for sustainable redevelopment during disaster recovery.
- Follow through from the Regional Office on sustainability efforts undertaken at the DFO.

and West Virginia flood declarations (FEMA-DR-1227-OH and FEMA-DR-1229-WV). This guide reflects some of the lessons learned from these and other early efforts and serves to launch this initiative on a nationwide basis.

What is sustainability and sustainable redevelopment?

Sustainability means many things to many people. What will you say when someone asks, “What is sustainability?” You might reply that it is the melding of environmental, economic, and societal values to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the needs of future generations. When you associate this terminology with your responsibilities related to disaster operations and recovery activities, you may focus on building and rebuilding smarter—reducing the potential for future disaster impacts and the associated economic and societal effects of such losses. To someone else, sustainability may relate to improving the energy efficiency of a transportation network or improving crop yield while reducing water and pesticide usage. You will find a number of definitions of sustainability in this guide; this is to illustrate the broad scope of the concept and stimulate your own thinking on the subject. The theme common to all the definitions is the goal of balancing environmental, economic, and social values.

In its broadest context, sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition was established by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) in 1987. Essentially, sustainability means that decisions made today should not reduce the options of future generations, but pass on to them a natural, economic, and social environment that provides a high quality of life.

Sustainable communities make more efficient use of their land. They emphasize open space planning where appropriate by promoting greenways, parks, and landscaping. The effective use of open space can prevent development from encroaching upon floodplains, active fault zones, and other hazard areas. Sustainable communities also take advantage of underutilized urban areas and encourage infill and brownfield development. Energy and resource conservation are high priorities. Emphasis is placed on public transit and creating mixed-use environments that are less dependent on automobiles.

An essential characteristic of a sustainable community is its resilience to natural disasters. The term sustainable redevelopment refers to applying the concepts and practices of sustainable development to the disaster recovery process. The post-disaster environment presents a unique opportunity to implement sustainability initiatives and to increase the quality of the built environment. If reconstruction is a major element of the recovery process, affected communities are presented with an opportunity to address such issues as the compatibility of development with the environment and natural hazards, the use of renewable resources, and improved community planning and physical design.

This guidance is designed to provide you with the basic tools to focus sustainable efforts following a major disaster. It is the second in a series of guides to help implement sustainability. The first document, ***Planning for a Sustainable Future: The Link Between Hazard Mitigation and Livability*** is primarily intended to show

communities how the goal of disaster resilience can be a catalyst, both in planning for disasters and recovering from them, to help achieve a sustainable future. It is one of your most important tools in promoting sustainability. This companion guide develops these themes into detailed practical guidance for the Sustainability Planner.

Why is FEMA involved with sustainability issues?

- The Federal Government allocates significant resources to help communities recover from natural disasters.
- Recovery from natural disasters (FEMA's primary mission) presents a unique opportunity to consider alternatives to the damage-rebuild-damage cycle.
- Repetitive disaster losses diminish our country's quality of life and divert resources that could be better used to address other national economic and social objectives.
- By partnering with other public agencies, businesses, and private citizens, we can save lives, lessen vulnerability to disasters, and help make communities more livable.
- By identifying potential sustainability resources, we can promote actions that will enable communities to move toward a sustainable future.

How can this guide help implement sustainability?

The extent to which a sustainability initiative can be integrated into the recovery effort is dependent on the nature and scope of the disaster and, more importantly, on the willingness and capabilities of local communities to undertake such an initiative. Providing leadership and appropriate, timely information to communities in the midst of a recovery effort is vital to implementing sustainability. Although this guidance is specifically directed to the Sustainability Planner, it contains information of value to state and local officials who may be involved in implementing sustainability initiatives.

Many of the sustainability tools, programs, and resources described in Section 5 and the Appendices are directly applicable to local jurisdictions (e.g., the PowerPoint presentation, key references, and information on websites).

The guide is organized as follows:

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) (Section 2) The SOP is likely to be familiar to FEMA disaster staff. It delineates the responsibilities of the Sustainability Planner. Section 2 is organized around the four major phases of the disaster recovery process—readiness, predeployment, deployment, and transition/standdown. It includes checklists of activities, identifies key players in implementing sustainable initiatives, and lays out a plan of action within the DFO environment.
- Focus on the Community (Section 3) This section provides information on what motivates communities to take action and outlines techniques for maximizing public involvement in the sustainability initiative. This section also includes a discussion on the elements of sustainability that may be applicable in a disaster recovery setting.
- Sustainability by Hazard Type (Section 4) This section provides suggestions for implementing sustainability by each of the major types of natural hazards.
- Eighteen Sustainability Tools and Programs (Section 5) This section describes a broad range of FEMA programs, key reference documents, and other tools that can be used to implement sustainable redevelopment initiatives.
- The appendices include a glossary, commonly used acronyms, a listing of sustainable development websites, and a recommended reading list. Appendix E

Federal Technical Assistance and Funding Matrix provides a concise guide to Federal resources that can be applied to sustainable redevelopment initiatives. Appendix K Quotable Material on Sustainability includes vision statements, principles, and quotes that can be woven into targeted community outreach materials.

Succeeding in Sustainability

To make the most of this guide, it is important to keep in mind that the sustainability initiative is a key element of FEMA's strategy to change the way America thinks about disasters. Its success depends on the proactive leadership of an interdisciplinary recovery team rather than traditional program management. The Sustainability Planner must seek innovative approaches to matching Federal programs with community needs and objectives.

Making sustainability a reality is best achieved through a collaborative effort of public agencies, the private sector, and key community leaders. The full range of benefits to the environment, cultural resources, and economic prosperity must be understood and the information shared with decision-makers and the public. As the Sustainability Planner, you must be flexible and adaptable in recommending approaches. The affected communities then determine how best to integrate sustainable development concepts into their overall reconstruction effort. By helping a community reduce its vulnerability to disasters, you assist it in taking one of the most significant steps toward sustainability.

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