

Leaders mobilizing “whole community” to protect and preserve Augusta, Georgia



Augusta, Georgia, plans to be ready long before the next disaster hits that Southern community. That’s why Augusta is going “all-out” to engage in planning, planning, and -- just to be on the safe side -- more planning.

Leaders know disaster losses can be curbed by planning, preparedness, and prevention measures (better known as “hazard mitigation”) and they know this kind of endeavor needs everybody involved, not just the leadership within the community. So Augusta’s goal is involve the entire community (every single person) in reducing long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards.

Planning to be disaster-resilient



A few years ago, Augusta faced a daunting array of urban challenges, including sprawl, fragmentation of governments, and significant risks from floods, tornadoes, and other hazards, says Terri Turner, Augusta’s Development Administrator. “To bring our community together, we formed very large planning and stakeholders committees representing city leadership, local agencies, and community-based organizations,” Terri says. “Together they decided to completely rework our five-year Hazard Mitigation Plan. The goal was to produce a ‘living document’ to reflect the community’s profile, present circumstances, and current and future needs.”

“Public involvement was the key.” Terri says. “The public was given many opportunities to be involved in the process. The Plan reflects common goals of sustainability, community resiliency, economic vitality, and protection of the community, as a whole.” Now, the Plan is complete, but their work is far from over. The planners and stakeholders will spend the coming years building on experiences from the recently updated Hazard Mitigation Plan and continuing to work to make Augusta more disaster resilient.

“Augusta has learned that proactive community hazard planning and implementation save lives, reduce property loss, and minimizes the social, economic and government disruptions caused by disasters,” Terri says.



Building a safer community

“Augusta encourages homeowners to build safer, stronger and more resilient homes and businesses, with strong building, stormwater and floodplain management regulations”, Terri says. To reduce disaster risks, Augusta supports floodplain acquisition, relocation, and retrofitting of existing vulnerable buildings.

Protecting invaluable natural resources and promoting sustainability

Additionally, Augusta takes pride in protecting its valuable natural resources, including the natural and beneficial functions of its vast array of wetlands, floodplains and sensitive areas.



The community has invested tremendous time, effort, and money into its prototype Greenspace Program, as well. The Central Savannah River Land Trust plays an important role in protecting sensitive places, which provide needed floodplain storage, recreation, and beloved amenity areas for the community’s citizens. Phinzy Swamp Nature Park conducts research and provides vital education and wetlands programs for the community. Finally, a new sustainable development manager has been recently hired to direct a number of sustainability initiatives community-wide.

A common purpose

The goal of all of this planning is to promote processes, policies and strategies that lend support to a resilient, economically vibrant, sustainable community, better prepared to respond to hazardous events and dedicated to the success of all citizens of and visitors to Augusta.

For more information: Terri L Turner, Development Administrator, or John Paul Stout, Sustainability Manager at Augusta Planning & Development, 706-821-1796 or the EMA Director at 706-821-1155.

Resilience demands the “whole community” working together to protect each other.

Resiliency doesn’t just fall into your lap. It takes the concerted efforts of a lot of “somebodies” doing a lot “somethings” right.

It demands people with vision, stamina, and purpose.

It involves leadership, good management, sustainability, and the courage to act in the community’s best interest.

Terri L Turner, AICP, CFM