



Progress Report  
on  
Local Mitigation Strategy

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*April 16, 2025*

## Village of Estero Progress Report on Local Mitigation Strategy

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This document is the annual status report of the Village Council, in conjunction with the attached April 8, 2025 Joint Local Mitigation Strategy Mitigation Action Plan for Lee County and its political subdivisions.

### 2022 Joint Local Mitigation Strategy

The Joint Local Mitigation Strategy Planning Team/Working Group is comprised of representatives from each municipality in Lee County as well as representatives from unincorporated Lee County. The County adopted the Local Mitigation Strategy in 2022. The Village of Estero Council adopted the Local Mitigation Strategy on July 6, 2022 (Resolution No. 2022-20). The Local Mitigation Strategy also serves as the Flood Mitigation Plan, as required of all communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and seek project funding from the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

The Village is required to conduct a yearly review of the progress of the Local Mitigation Strategy projects. The Local Mitigation Strategy plan document is updated every five years. The Local Mitigation Strategy is a companion document to the Lee County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan as well as individual municipalities' Emergency Management Plans. The Local Mitigation Strategy identifies core mitigation capabilities and describes short- and long-term mitigation strategies and activities. In addition, the Local Mitigation Strategy sets mitigation goals, objectives, and strategies delineating community actions to reduce hazard risks.

### Mitigation Priorities

Preventative activities include those that reduce the risk to people, property, and the environment. The Village has undertaken several preventative activities as outlined below.

#### *Property Acquisitions in the Floodplain and Floodway – Reduced Development Impacts in Floodplain*

- The Village of Estero purchased the “Estero on the River” property (\$24,562,500) which is located in the regulated floodplain and contains a floodway. Approximately half of the site, the 31.5-acre portion of the property located south of the Estero River, is now being developed as a passive park with walking paths. Exotic vegetation removal is underway. Walking paths will be constructed after eagle nesting season. Acquisition of the property furthers natural resource protection and prevents future development. The property had been rezoned by Lee County for intense commercial use and residential use. After the Village purchased the property, the Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the land use from the most intensive category, Village Center, to Public Parks and Recreation. The Council also

rezoned the southern half of the property from Mixed Use Development to Park and Community Facilities, a “downzoning” which severely restricts the uses.

- The Village of Estero also purchased the River Oaks property (\$1,200,000). This property is located in the regulated floodplain and contains a floodway. Intended use is for hiking trails, conservation, and a nature education facility. The property acquisition also furthers natural resource protection. This property had also been slated for development by Lee County prior to the Village’s incorporation. Exotic vegetation has recently been removed.
- The Village purchased a 72-acre site owned by the Lee County School District for a Regional Stormwater Facility. This is further described under Future Projects.

These acquisitions are consistent with and further implement Goal 1 of the Joint Local Mitigation Strategy which is to “Reduce community risk and vulnerability to hazards especially flooding hazards”. These acquisitions also further Goal 3 which seeks to “Support natural resource protection activities that preserve or maintain natural areas”.

#### Short-Term Mitigation

Two public emergency shelters have been established in Estero; the Estero Recreation Center and Hertz Arena. These facilities have been maintained and enhanced as public shelters over this review period. Hertz Arena was recently improved with roof repairs and hurricane strengthening.

Lee County is also currently evaluating the Joint LMS “Mitigation Action Plan”. A draft copy is attached. The draft Mitigation Action Plan will be presented to the Disaster Advisory Council prior to May. This Plan shows the status of 30 pages of projects. Numerous projects on this list have been completed or are in progress.

#### Future Projects

1. *Regional Stormwater Facility* - The Village of Estero purchased a 72-acre Lee County School District site on Three Oaks Parkway for \$15,000,000. This project will become the Estero Regional Stormwater Facility and will make stormwater conveyance improvements to the Estero River North Branch by providing storage and peak flow diversion from the North Branch to the South Branch. This will reduce flood risk to people and property, address environmental issues, and promote Local Mitigation Strategy goals. This property was slated for development as a large, combined middle and elementary school but now will serve as green infrastructure.
2. *Broadway West Utilities Extension Project – Phase C (Luettich Lane and Sherrill Lane)* - This project promotes Goal 2 of the Joint Local Mitigation Strategy by reducing impacts to repetitive loss. The project will address local flooding issues by rebuilding the roadside swales, providing a stormwater component where none existed, as well as providing central water and sewer.

3. *Broadway West Drainage and Safety Improvements* – This project will address the roadside shoulders, sidewalks, and swales in areas that had been subject to flooding in recent hurricanes. This area is entirely in the regulated floodplain. Design is anticipated to begin this year.
4. *Improved Stormwater Flow Capacity* - The Village has an agreement with the Seminole Gulf Railway for railroad ditch maintenance which improves drainage for several communities such as Cascades, Cypress Bend, and the residential neighborhood south of Broadway East that includes Orange Blossom Lane, Mockingbird Lane, and Judeth Lane. This agreement allows the Village to undertake vegetation control and debris removal work within the ditch on the railroad's property to maintain stormwater flow capacity.
5. *Grants* - The Village received two grants, one for a Village-wide Vulnerability Study and the second for a Planning Study for the "Old Estero" area, a large area developed prior to modern standards and regulations. The studies will address resiliency and flooding issues. The grants are through the CDBG-DR program. The Vulnerability Assessment will include a comprehensive assessment of the Village's vulnerabilities to environmental conditions including storm surge and rainfall flooding, sea level rise, and drought conditions and will provide recommendations to reduce impacts to life, safety, and property. The Planning Study encompasses a 1,000-acre area of the Village and will include recommendations for a plan for more resilient and sustainable development.

#### *Demonstrated Compliance with FEMA Mitigation Strategies*

1. FEMA, in several publications, recommends strategies that jurisdictions may use to mitigate the impact of flooding and natural disasters. One such recommended strategy is the implementation of "Green Infrastructure". While "Green Infrastructure" is a broad term, the Village has been implementing this in a variety of ways. The Village has acquired the properties discussed above for a total of \$40.7 million. These properties are all located in the floodplain. Now that the properties are under Village ownership they are no longer subject to the previously approved private development of thousands of square feet of commercial use and hundreds of residential dwellings.
2. Additionally, the Village is undertaking "green infrastructure" utility projects to extend sanitary sewer service to existing homes in the floodplain as previously described. This has two benefits: 1) the septic systems will no longer be flooded in disaster events and polluting the Estero River, and 2) the reconstruction of the public utility easements along roads where new lines are installed will enhance drainage and help mitigate flooding.
3. Another example of "green infrastructure" was codified in the 2021 Land Development Code. The parking section of the Village Code has a standard that states if a project proposes more than 125% of the required parking for a use, the excess parking must be pervious. This is a direct effort to reduce vast expanses of asphalt and reduce runoff. These are examples of how the Village is being proactive and finding opportunities to implement flood mitigation in everyday development projects, utility projects, and strategic use of public funds regarding property acquisition.

4. Another significant achievement made by the Village was the completion of the Substantial Damage Administrative Procedures (SDAP). In short, FEMA required the Village to develop this plan and have it complete in November 2024. This milestone was accomplished. However, the Village went even further by developing additional protocols and incorporating additional procedures so that in a time of disaster staff can be trained, procurement executed in compliance with FEMA, and appropriate data collection is collected and tracked. The SDAP is a very useful tool that acts as a one stop FEMA-compliant resource for staff. Not only will it ensure that FEMA requirements are met, but it also improves the Village's service delivery to residents and businesses during a disaster declaration by ensuring consistency, strategic action, and documentation.
5. The SDAP meets Goal 5 of the Joint Local Mitigation Strategy as it has catalogued "mitigation-related ordinances, codes, policies and plans, to ensure an up-to-date integration of all documents".

### Conclusion

The Village continues its proactive efforts and commitment to mitigate flooding impacts and improve the safety of the residents of Estero through the Joint Local Mitigation Strategy and its short term and long term priorities outlined in this report.