Town of Lexington
Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Strategy
Summary

Introduction

The Town of Lexington, one of 7 "Mountaintop Towns" in Greene County, New York, is a small community of approximately 800 people located in the Catskill Mountains. Characterized by its mountainous terrain, low population density, and rural character, Lexington is adjacent to Schoharie Creek and West Kill Creek, and has been significantly impacted during flood events.

Flood Event

On August 28, 2011, Hurricane Irene caused unprecedented flooding along creeks and rivers in upstate New York as a result of record rainfall. During the storm, a stream gage along the Schoharie Creek in Lexington recorded a water height of 22.87 feet--a new period- of-record maximum. A week later, Tropical Storm Lee contributed to the problem with another set of flooding in many places. Presidential disaster declarations due to the storms were issued in August and September of 2011.

The storms impacted Lexington with significant infrastructure and economic costs. Lexington's infrastructure such as electrical grids, roads and bridges, and communication networks were severely damaged in the flood. Widespread flooding resulted in not only significant Town and County road and bridge damage, but also resulted in the isolation of a large portion of Town residents with no way in or out, and no electricity, telephone, cell phone, or Internet service.

LTCR Grant & Planning Process

After these events, Lexington received a grant to develop a Long Term Community Recovery strategy (LTCR) from the New York State Department of State. LTCR is a process to help a community take action to address the significant long-term implications of the Hurricane Irene flood. It is intended to further the disaster recovery process and move toward improvement on the pre-disaster conditions, ultimately helping Lexington become healthier, more sustainable and disaster resilient.

As such, this LTCR looks comprehensively at economics, infrastructures, social/health services, community services, natural and cultural resources, and housing, and considers governmental, non-governmental, and private sectors. It is based on extensive public input that helped identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, issues, and potential recovery and revitalization actions.

Through the planning process, a vision and set of goals for Lexington's recovery were identified. This LTCR strategy does not replace existing efforts or plans. Rather, it builds from them and, with a focus on recovery and action, helps pinpoint strategies needed for long-term recovery, especially those related to economic revitalization. The result is a list of projects ready to implement.

Projects Identified during the LTRC were evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Housing development, redevelopment and relocation,
2. Commercial, industrial and agricultural uses to be developed, redeveloped and relocated
3. Infrastructure repair, redevelopment and relocation
4. Environmental feature repair, restoration and enhancement

To arrive at a final list of priority projects, data analysis, public input, and other recovery planning criteria were considered.

Recovery Projects

The result is a list of projects created with significant public and stakeholder input in categories such as Emergency Planning Response and Flood Mitigation, Infrastructure, Community Enhancement, and Economic Development that meet recovery goals and satisfy the four resiliency criteria.

Of the list of projects, the LTCR process established twelve as Priority Projects. Two projects were further emphasized as **Very High Priority Projects**. Other listed but non-priority projects are still important, but they may be actions that are not initiated right away. For each Priority Project, a project narrative was developed, providing a description, scope of work, cost estimate, and other key details designed to help the Town of Lexington implement these projects. The Priority Projects are:

- Emergency Recovery Program – Equipment
- Flood Remediation Implementation
- Stream Corridor Restoration and Stabilization
- Community Meeting Place and Emergency Command Center
- **Broadband Connectivity and Cell Towers**
- Stabilization Study of West Kill Creek and North Beech Ridge
- National Historic District Nomination
- Zoning Law Updated and Creation of Design Guidelines
- Historic Structure Rehabilitation and Reuse
- Schoharie Creek Public Access
- **Community-Based Not-For-Profit Corporation**
- Co-Operative Store
- Tourism Development and Marketing Plan

Implementation Next Steps

Implementation of the recommendations provided in this Strategy will require both financial resources and building capacity. It will need a commitment among municipal and leaders from organizations, businesses, and individuals to improve communication and collaboration.

The LTCR also details General Implementation Steps including convening workshops, pursuing funding opportunities, creating task forces, and working on potential "catalyst" projects. The plan also provides a summary of each project in an Implementation Matrix to make essential project details accessible and help bring these ideas to reality. Priority projects are those that are those critical to initiate as soon as possible.