Introduction

Catastrophic man-made disasters such as the train derailments and chemical plant explosions, and natural disasters such as Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, and most recently Dorian, have punctuated the need for Florida communities to enhance mitigation and recovery plans. For many years, Florida Statutes had required coastal communities’ comprehensive plans to include an objective to establish a Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP) to address recovery in the wake of catastrophic disasters. This is no longer a requirement, however the American Planning Association (APA) Foundation is encouraging communities to develop disaster recovery projects to strengthen community resiliency to disaster impacts and the City of Deerfield Beach actively sought out this grant to develop a PDRP. The City resides outside the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council’s region, however through the cooperation of the South Florida Regional Planning Council, the TCRPC was able to work on this project to create a PDRP for Deerfield Beach, of benefit to the City and the region.

The purpose of a PDRP is to encourage vulnerable communities to develop a planning process to undertake preparations ensuring long-term community sustainability through pre-disaster planning and post-disaster implementation.

Background

The APA Foundation raised money to fund a competitive grant program. The City of Deerfield Beach was one of the first grantees to be awarded these funds under the APA Foundation grant program. The award supported the City of Deerfield Beach in developing a PDRP as a preparedness tool to guide redevelopment efforts should they experience catastrophic disaster impacts.

The PDRP promotes faster, healthier and more effective and efficient recovery during the post-disaster and rebuilding period that follows. There were five primary areas addressed in the Deerfield Beach PDRP: Economic Redevelopment, Housing & Community Redevelopment, Health & Human Services, Infrastructure & Public Utilities, and Environmental & Sustainable
Management. The plan building process emphasizes full participation through local government departmental leadership, a stakeholder committee, and citizens of Deerfield Beach.

Post-disaster planning addressed several elements that enabled the government to assess current conditions in the City related to preparedness, mitigation, and the ability to redevelop in the wake of a catastrophic disaster. The initial step in planning was to assess potential natural and man-made hazards that the City’s community, infrastructure, and environment are vulnerable to or have the potential to be impacted by. The Vulnerability Analysis element of the PDRP sets forth the top hazards and potential losses the City could experience. Creation of an inventory of infrastructure and critical facilities, vulnerable structures and populations, and environmental resources was valuable in the development of the on-going mitigation effort, but also in development of a protective strategy.

Planning guidance has adopted an expanded and more holistic approach to stakeholder engagement by building more comprehensive group of local government departments, non-profit agencies, community groups, and public and private entities that provide essential and critical services during the recovery period following disasters. Generally, the response phase of a disaster engages the same departments and this response team will transition to a recovery team. The stakeholder committee essentially develops the standard operating guidelines that the City will be redeveloped under, and defines duties and responsibilities during execution of the Plan. The stakeholder committee also established best practices that strengthen the ability of the government and community to resume normalcy as soon as possible.

An institutional capacity assessment was conducted to integrate local plans and operating protocols to understand the City’s ability to redevelop effectively and efficiently utilizing established policies and ordinances. Further in the process, the stakeholder committee decided what policies will need to be added or enhanced to strengthen capabilities to provide services, and avoid redundancy and/or costly activities in their redevelopment strategy. This process captured opportunities and recommendations for community improvement that were consistent with the goals of the local comprehensive plan while incorporating community vision, providing for changes in social and political values, and future community challenges. The City developed a Financing Strategy that will address the many aspects of funding redevelopment and includes Federal, State and local grants, loans, and fund sharing to supplement the established emergency disaster fund.

The Action Plan is a matrix of suggested and planned activities that are related to specific goals and objectives to be accomplished within a proposed timeline. Each stakeholder group within the five primary groups established defined activities that are designed to enhance preparedness and mitigation and assigned departments to achieve the tasks. The matrix is a planning tool that guides departments toward the ultimate goals and objectives listed within the chapter. This list is not final by any measure, but is rather a dynamic document to which actions can be added and removed as needed.

Outreach and education is also an important part of the ability of the City to maintain economic vitality. Any City or local government is at risk of losing community residents and businesses impacted by the disaster through migration to other regions if plans are not implemented to
preserve quality of life. Initially, response capabilities will set the tone for the community; the faster the power is restored and residents and businesses can return to normalcy, the more likely they are to remain. However, in the face of catastrophic disaster, the City must ensure the community is part of the long-term process of rebuilding so as not to lose the economic engine that drives redevelopment. As called for in the PDRP, the City will develop a robust communications program to educate small businesses and residents on programs, funding, and other resources in place to maintain recovery.

Overall, the City of Deerfield Beach has embarked on the post-disaster planning process with strong effort and disciplined intent to prepare, protect, and lessen the impacts of catastrophic disaster on its residents and businesses with the intent to build a more sustainable and resilient community. The City of Deerfield Beach Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan is in final draft form and once the City Commission adopts the Plan, staff will provide a link to the document on Council’s website.

Recommendation

For information only.

Council Action – December 13, 2019

Council received a PowerPoint presentation from Kathryn Boer, Emergency Programs Director, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (copy attached).