

sustainable community development, there is a broad and potentially dynamic connection between emergency management and community development that holds the potential for enhancing the public value of emergency management to the communities it serves. The challenge is to recast emergency management as a participant in the broad nexus of institutional and public actors who influence the process of community planning and development. Sustainable development is the key to this nexus.

Sustainability to the emergency manager usually means that a locality can withstand and overcome any damage (property damage, lost economic opportunity, etc.) without significant outside assistance (Mileti, 1999). Hazard mitigation is, more importantly, the specific emergency management function that ties it to the concept of sustainability. The fostering of local sustainability in the face of extreme hazard events, natural or manmade, is a prominent theme in the current emergency management literature. Emergency managers have been increasingly trained, in assessing and preparing to face the specific hazard risks that confront their communities, to think in terms of hazard mitigation. The rationale of hazard mitigation begins with the realization that disasters are frequently not unexpected. They stem from predictable interactions between the physical environment and the demographic characteristics of the communities that experience them. Based on this realization, hazard mitigation takes the form of advanced action to eliminate or reduce the risks and potential costs associated with natural and manmade hazards.

In light of the historic and rising costs associated with natural disasters in the U.S. over the decade of the 1990's, for example, it has become accepted wisdom that a preeminent objective of emergency management must be to mitigate hazards in a sustainable way to stop the trend of increasing and catastrophic losses from natural hazards. It has also, with the passage of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, become a matter of federal law. In order to reduce the impact of recurrent natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes on human life and property, advanced planning to mitigate the risks associated with them and to reduce the vulnerability of communities is required by this law.

The new emergency management may well be said to have begun with a focus on hazard mitigation. Over the past decade, emergency managers have become more conversant with the concept of structural mitigation. This includes the strengthening of buildings and infrastructure exposed to hazard risks by a variety of well-known means (building codes, engineering designs, construction practices etc.). The purpose of structural mitigation is to increase resilience and damage resistance. Emergency managers have also become increasingly, if somewhat more reluctantly, conversant with the notion of non-structural mitigation as well. Non-structural mitigation includes directing new development away from high-risk locations through land use plans and regulations, relocating existing developments that have sustained damage to safer locations, and maintaining the protective features of the natural environment that may absorb and reduce hazard impacts. The emphasis on hazard mitigation, structural and especially non-structural, brings emergency management into a much broader arena and significantly expands its potential scope and impact. It brings emergency management to the center of the vital task of planning and implementing sustainable community development.