ADAMS COUNTY LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Adams County Long-Term Recovery and Resiliency Strategic Plan aims to strengthen the County's organizational capacity to better address disruptions that impact our community. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and facing increasing risk from natural hazards - such as extreme temperatures, wildfire, drought, floods and severe storms - the need to better anticipate, respond to, absorb, adapt to, and thrive amidst natural and human-caused disasters has become increasingly critical to ensure Adams County is the most innovative and inclusive county in America for all families and businesses.

The Plan provides a clear framework, a call to action, and a partnership approach that places emphasis on supporting underrepresented and under-resourced communities, offering a comprehensive and cohesive strategy to enhance resilience capacities and capabilities among both Adams County government and its community stakeholders.

Development of the plan followed a rigorous methodology, incorporating best practices in research, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and expertise across multiple disciplines. This approach supports Adams County's goals to establish a structured process for resilience, develop a shared resilience vision, and define and catalyze priority resilience projects. The plan is informed by the Adams County Resiliency Working Group, composed of internal and external stakeholders; a detailed review of over 35 existing County plans, strategies, and surveys; insights from 20 interviews with County officials; and feedback from six community listening sessions.

The resulting framework is organized around 5 Themes, with 15 Goals and 60 Actions, each designed to support the key objectives of enhancing preparedness, protecting lives and livelihoods, and fostering community resilience.

To ensure that that goals and actions contained in this Strategic Plan are achieved, a detailed Implementation Strategy will be developed to assist County leadership and staff in the appropriate designation of tasks and resources across the organization for effective implementation.

RESILIENCY AND RECOVERY GOALS AND ACTIONS

DATA UTILIZATION - Accurate and actionable data that identifies areas of risk and enables the design of targeted interventions and the effective allocation of resources.

Goal 1: Data Generation – Expand the quality, quantity, and type of data available to the County to better inform decision making.

a. Identify, gather, and organize data related to natural hazards, climate risk, environmental justice, demographics, and social determinants of health.
b. Geolocate existing and new data across departments

Goal 2: Data Sharing – Create mechanisms to facilitate cross-departmental learning and sharing of data and information.

a. Educate staff on available data and how to integrate it into program/project planning and implementation via (i.) data fact sheets and (ii.) lunch-and-learn sessions that provide GIS and other data-related education/training to County staff.
b. Enhance data and maps on County website with more robust and comprehensive data for County and public use (reference Action 1.a.). Where appropriate, provide links to external data sources from trusted federal, state, and non-governmental sources.

Goal 3: Data Integration – Ensure policies, programs, and projects are informed by accurate and actionable data.

a. Require a Resiliency Checklist for program, project, and budgetary planning to ensure environmental, climate, and hazard data is considered in County initiatives.
b. Require an Equity Checklist to use for program, project, and budgetary planning to ensure racial and social equity-related data is considered in County initiatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY - The policies, systems, resources, and staffing needed for Adams County to achieve long-term recovery and resiliency priorities.

Goal 4: Learning & Development – Foster continuous learning around resilience and recovery themes to create an informed and action-ready workforce.

    a. Provide county-wide education and training for equity- and resilience-related topics via workshops, newsletters/county-wide communications, and lunch-and-learn sessions.

    b. Provide risk and crisis communication training for elected officials and public-facing staff.

Goal 5: Staffing – Enhance the capabilities of resilience- and recovery-focused departments with appropriate subject matter expertise and support.

    a. Enhance OEM staffing to support/sustain priorities related to internal and external initiatives that build county and partner capacity.

    b. Enhance Office of Resilient Communities & Partnerships capacity through provision of subject matter expertise in climate risk, environmental sciences, and/or disaster risk reduction.

Goal 6: Equity – Embrace, systematize, and operationalize social and racial equity as a core value of Adams County.

    a. Build a Project Impact Assessment model to understand and mitigate unintended consequences of policies, programs, and projects.

    b. Draft and adopt a County-wide Race and Equity Framework.

    c. Establish equity-centric policies and practices for County procurement of goods and services.

    d. Establish equity-related metrics to monitor and evaluate policy and program implementation.

    e. Conduct a County-wide equity audit of laws, policies, and projects to better understand equity implication of County operations.

    f. Following the County wide equity audit (refence Action 6.e.), identify potential interventions to remedy any existing land-use/zoning issues related to environmental justice.

g. Translate current Parks initiative that tracks use/visitor data to inform equitable access to outdoor spaces into a pilot program which could be replicated for other County services.

Goal 7: Disaster Management – Build comprehensive, integrated disaster management capacities to support the County and community before, during, and after a crisis or disruption.

a. Inventory and map critical facilities and community lifelines.
b. Conduct a backup power assessment of county-owned and critical non-county owned assets.
c. Conduct assessment of building code and land-use compliance and vulnerability/exposure of public buildings, critical facilities, and community lifelines.
d. Establish policy for required roles and responsivities for non-OEM departments and staff for the Emergency Operations Center when activated.
e. Conduct evacuation and sheltering plan exercise (field and/or table-top) with participating departments and external partners.
f. Ensure departments and offices with assigned roles in the Disaster Management Plan (DMP) have detailed plans to accompany the general guidance contained in DMP annexes (i.e. Mass Care, EST-7, ESF 15b, Evacuation, etc.) Support training/education on these plans to assigned stakeholders.
g. Support fire districts in unincorporated Adams County, particularly those serving eastern Adams County, in applying for federal grants that enhance their ability to serve rural areas (i.e. FEMA's "SAFER" grant).
h. Adopt Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) building and land-use regulations for new developments. Consider incentive programs for retrofitting existing structures and landscapes.
i. Conduct assessment of historic buildings and heritage sites to evaluate viable hazard mitigation projects. These may be eligible for funding via State of Colorado's Survey Plan Grant program.
j. Improve Adams County's FEMA Community Rating System Classification to enhance flood preparedness and mitigation.
k. Conduct an assessment/analysis of extreme heat and heat-island effects in Adams County to inform targeted interventions.

Goal 8: Continuity of Operations – Ensure essential County functions remain operational in case of an emergency or disruption.

a. Establish a policy to mandate department-level Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs).

b. Require department-level After Action Reviews following COOP activations.

c. Provide regular training and exercise to ensure each department is familiar with their COOP prior to activation.

COMMUNICATION & CONSENSUS BUILDING - The language, channels, and mechanisms by which Adams County stakeholders learn of and communicate risks and disruptions, and the reinforcement of both purpose and action across the community.

Goal 9: Education and Awareness - Provide residents and County officials with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to achieve the County's recovery and resiliency priorities.

a. Develop education signage along open spaces and trail networks to describe ecosystems and their value to community resilience.

b. Create education and awareness campaign for businesses and residents related to climate risk, environmental justice, the role of community in resilience-building, and other related topics.

c. Build a communications and engagement plan to leverage the Adams County Long-Term Recovery and Resiliency Strategic Plan to socialize the resiliency vision and goals of the County.

d. Conduct risk and emergency education and awareness events with health facilities, senior centers, community-serving non-governmental organizations, and community lifeline asset holders.

e. Create a "Train the Trainer" program to equip leaders in the County and community to be resilience ambassadors.

f. Install signage in public spaces (trails, buildings, parks, etc.) marking past hazard events, such as flood heights, ecological or environmental disasters, wildfires, etc.).

g. Develop and deliver education and training for County staff and elected officials on the impacts of climate events on populations and neighborhoods with disproportionate vulnerability and/or exposure and how those impacts can be mitigated and/or minimized.

h. Expand DEI training beyond new hires to include all staff.

Goal 10: Formalize Partnerships - Improve community-based recovery and resiliency capacities through structured engagement with community partners.

    a. Inventory existing partnerships across all County departments to consolidate into a partnership database.

    b. (i.) Conduct analysis to identify and map community-based organizations critical to community resilience. (ii.) Identify service area and geographic gaps that may exist. (iii.) Create engagement strategy to recruit new community partner organizations to participate in County recovery and resiliency initiatives.

    c. Create and/or renew Memorandums of Understanding with partner organizations that define roles and responsibilities of each party before, during, and after disruptions.

    d. (i.) Establish the Adams County Resiliency Working Group as a permanent advisory group to inform equitable resilience initiatives. (ii.) Add a subject matter expert in environment, climate, disaster risk reduction to the Working Group.

Goal 11: Engagement Policies and Practices - Establish standard guidelines, procedures, and practices for community engagement across the organization.

    a. Standardize stakeholder engagement policies and practices County-wide, with emphasis on best practices for engaging with under resourced and historically disadvantaged communities.

    b. (i.) Share engagement contacts and networks across departments (reference Action 10.a). (ii.) Create procedures and mechanisms for engaging with networks established by other departments/offices.

    c. Inform and reinforce the value of public participation through systems that provide follow-up information and post-engagement communication to community participants.

    d. Include climate, disaster, and environmental risk as topic in relevant engagement activities (i.e. Quality of Life survey).

    e. Develop Key Performance Indicators for engagement activities to monitor, evaluate, and inform enhanced engagement practices and outcomes.

Goal 12: Private Sector Engagement - Mobilize private sector stakeholders to bolster the economic and social resilience of Adams County.

a. Support business community preparedness and resilience through Business COOP development program.
b. Provide the business community with education and awareness activities to inform them of their role in building economic, social, and environmental resilience.
c. Establish a "Resilient Adams Business Coalition" program which incentivizes best practices in economic, social, and environmental resilience.

FUNDING & FINANCE - The cultivation of long-term, sustainable, and diverse funding opportunities and the promotion of equitable distribution of resources to support recovery and resiliency priorities.

Goal 13: Diversify Funding Sources - Identify and pursue additional funding sources across the Federal, State, philanthropic, and private sectors.

a. Consider federal funding agencies and mechanisms that may support the planning and implementation of recovery and resilience priorities, including but not limited to DHS, DOE, HUD, USDA, EPA, DOT, DOD, and DOI.
b. Liaise with Colorado' Department of Local Affairs to explore State grant programs.
c. Identify philanthropic organizations active in local governance affairs, including but not limited to the Kresge Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies.
d. Participate in professional networks that can facilitate access to partnerships and funding sources, including but not limited to the Urban Sustainability Directors Network and the Resilient Cities Network.

Goal 14: Embedding Resilience and Equity - Ensure County expenditures contribute positively to building resilience and enhancing social equity County-wide.

a. Require cost-benefit analyses, along with Resilience and Equity Checklists (reference Actions 3.a and 3.b.).

Goal 15: Innovative Finance - Explore innovative partnerships and finance mechanisms to support the County's long-term recovery and resiliency objectives.

a. Consider community-based catastrophe insurance for critical sectors and/or high-risk neighborhoods.

b. Evaluate the potential of Green Bonds and/or Local Climate Bonds as a mechanism to fund programs that enhance environmental resilience.

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