

PE7 Action: Strategic Relocation

4 Points

7 Points

8 Points

11 Points

A. Why is this action important?

In nearly every community, there are areas that are subject to flooding. Additionally, there may be areas that are expected to regularly flood or be permanently inundated in the near future due to climate change. In many cases, the flooding of these areas leads to significant costs (financial, social, and otherwise) to the community. In some cases, it may be beneficial to relocate uses (such as schools, hospitals, or other critical facilities) out of high-risk flood areas. In other instances, it may not be as feasible to relocate a use that is water dependent, such as a port or boat launch. Strategically relocating certain uses or assets away from current or future flood-prone zones can reduce or eliminate the risk of flood damage, reduce emergency response demands, and potentially save lives. In addition, strategic relocation can facilitate restoration of the natural floodplain or landward migration of tidal coastline areas in response to rising sea levels. Relocating uses or changing the development patterns of a community can have far reaching physical and social impacts that must be considered in advance of making any changes. Therefore, the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages municipalities to conduct public engagement and foster local support during the planning and implementation process.

Please note that purchasing vulnerable land as part of a strategic relocation project can be applied for CSC points under PE7 Action: Conserve Natural Areas.

B. How to implement this action

When considering strategic relocation of uses out of the floodplain, the planning process can stand alone or be integrated with other planning processes (e.g., comprehensive planning, hazard mitigation planning, local waterfront revitalization planning). This action can be implemented by undertaking the following steps:

1. Gather information on the demographic makeup of your community to understand what a fair representation of citizens looks like, possible with the help of an equity toolkit, such as the [Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit](#). Identify stakeholders who represent different neighborhoods, community-based organizations, and businesses as well as a range of ages and other demographic and cultural backgrounds and perspective representatives from the traditionally marginalized groups, including black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), immigrants, people who speak English as a second language, low-income residents, the elderly, people with disabilities or chronic health conditions, individuals experiencing homelessness, youth, seniors, rural and urban residents, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) residents. Consider who has not been at the table in the past and make sure that those groups are meaningfully included.
2. Establish an inclusive planning process by creating a diverse and representative task force (based on your results from step 1) to coordinate the effort and perform public outreach and engagement throughout the process from the beginning.
 - The task force should include staff members and a subcommittee of the local CSC task force focused on climate adaptation, as well as a cross-section of community stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and local and regional organizations. The task force coordinator should strive to achieve appropriate representation of race, class, gender, and all relevant categories of difference in the task force. Plan task force meetings to be accessible in terms of location and transportation options, and if possible, provide food, childcare and/or compensation for members' labor to support stakeholder attendance.
 - Increase the internal capacity of the task force to incorporate equity considerations by completing antiracism and/or equity and the environment trainings (see resources below in Section G).
 - Develop a public engagement strategy website for the planning process and share regular updates via

- multiple platforms to reach the widest audience possible. This can include social media, emails, websites, and other virtual means as well as printed materials posted in public spaces/events and mailed to residents (e.g., on the back of their water bill), and municipal communications.
 - Perform regular public outreach by engaging meeting community members where they are (e.g., locations that are embedded in or easily accessible to existing residents and under-represented groups) and enabling their participation through transportation, food, and childcare.
3. Map areas, uses and assets in the floodplain and along the waterfront at risk from current flooding and future floodplain inundation due to sea-level rise. Refer to prior studies or assessments, where relevant and available; examples include climate vulnerability assessments and watershed assessments.
 - Map buildings/assets that have suffered repetitive loss through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), or otherwise identified as repetitively damaged.
 - Utilize [FEMA floodplain maps](#) as well as hazard mapping tools, such as sea level rise viewers, lake level viewers, risk areas maps, etc., to understand current and potential future impacts to existing buildings/assets.
 4. Engage key stakeholders identified during the public engagement strategy and work with them to do the following:
 - Identify existing plans and zoning that may need to be taken into account or revised.
 - Explore planning, legislation, policy, zoning, funding and incentive tools such as Transfer of Development Right (TDR), Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Rolling Easements and buy-out programs which will help implement re-location (see resources in Section G).
 - Divide vulnerable uses and assets between (a) those that are water-dependent or otherwise cannot be relocated, and (b) those that could be relocated.
 - Identify potential sites that could receive a relocated structure or land use.
 - Prioritize the uses and assets most appropriate for relocation (including considering whether the uses continue to meet a need or might be discontinued).
 - Determine which of the potential relocation sites is most appropriate for that use.
 5. Create a strategic relocation plan. The plan may be created as a standalone document or as part of a larger planning process or report. Ensure that the relocation plan is connected, to the extent relevant, to other waterfront planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive planning, hazard mitigation planning, planning for a [Local Waterfront Revitalization Program](#)). The strategic relocation plan should accomplish the following objectives:
 - Identify the areas in the community to which strategic relocation will apply, explaining why relocation is being planned for the specific area.
 - Conduct cost-benefit analysis to justify relocation. Economic analysis should include, but is not limited to, costs and benefits/future costs saved related to damages, reconstruction, physical relocation, emergency response, open space, recreation, etc.
 - Include actions for implementing strategic relocation, including additions or changes to local zoning or other regulations, buy-out programs, and long-term site uses, restoration and management
 - Provide clear timelines for each action and assign responsibility for implementing each step.
 - Describe public education or engagement strategies that support implementation of the plan.
 - If the plan involves the use of FEMA buyout funding, keep in mind that this funding must be requested by the municipality after a presidentially-declared disaster and then approved by the state. (FEMA will provide up to 75% of buyout funding, requiring the remaining 25% be paid by the local or state government.)
 6. Formally adopt the relocation plan and any local implementing legislation (e.g., zoning changes). Incorporate the plan into the local comprehensive plan.
 7. Implement the plan. Work with partners to facilitate strategic relocation of uses or structures and work on restoring the site to a natural state that may or may not include passive uses. This work may include restoration actions as well as long-term maintenance and management. If it is determined that a vulnerable property should be purchased and its use relocated, the purchased land should have a conservation easement or other protection in place to ensure it will be established as open space. And consider, where applicable, applying for points under PE7 Action: Conserve Natural Areas.
 8. Track progress, evaluate strategies, and gather information (such as changes in scientific climate change projections) to include in the next revision of the strategic relocation plan.

C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Creating the framework for strategic relocation out of flood-prone areas should be done in collaboration with stakeholders affected by this change. If a community has not already started this process, it is possible planning for strategic relocation could take a year or more. Implementation of the plan will likely take many years and require external as well as internal

funding.

D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this action?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. Planning and zoning departments, including the designated local Floodplain Administrator are most likely to be responsible for this action. For the effort to be successful, cross-department involvement and support are recommended. Municipal committees, such as CSC task forces, conservation advisory councils, environmental conservation committees, or watershed groups may also be involved. Coordination with the state is necessary for FEMA buyout funding. Also note: If this action is led by another organization, such as a county, municipalities must demonstrate substantial involvement in the effort to be eligible for CSC points.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Points for this action are tiered based on completion of the elements described below. All must have occurred within ten years prior to the application date.

	<i>POSSIBLE POINTS</i>
Develop (or update) and officially adopt a plan for strategic relocation out of current or future flood-prone areas	4
Amend zoning or adopt other regulations to implement one or more strategies from the relocation plan	3
Establish a buy-out program based on the relocation plan, or participate in an existing buy-out program for properties in the flood zone	4

F. What to submit

Submit a strategic relocation plan that is consistent with the guidance in Section B above. Provide evidence of adoption of the plan by the local government. Submit information about the public outreach process and materials developed to inform and engage stakeholders during the planning process. Adoption of the plan (or an update to the plan) must have occurred within ten years prior to the application date.

For zoning/regulations, submit documentation describing them and how they represent implementation of the relocation plan. For buyout programs, submit a description of the program including its scope and when the local government launched it or began participating in it.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or examples

Strategic relocation and community process resources

- [FEMA Fact Sheet: Acquisition of Property After a Flood Event](#)
- [Sustainable Connecticut's Equity Toolkit](#)
- [Racial Equity Tools' Training and Popular Education](#)
- [Georgetown Climate Center Managed Retreat Toolkit](#)
- [NOAA Out Of Harm's Way: Relocation Strategies To Reduce Flood Risk](#)
- [Buy-in for Buyouts: The Case for Managed Retreat from Flood Zones](#)
- [Climigration Network](#)
- [Buy-In "believes we can make the buyout process better to help communities become flood-free"](#)

- [Managed Coastal Retreat: A Handbook of Tools, Case Studies, and Lessons Learned](#)
- [NOAA National Coastal Zone Management Program](#)

Flood risk mapping resources

- [FEMA Map Service Center](#)
- [NYS DOS Coastal Risk Area Maps](#)
- [NOAA Great Lakes Level Viewer](#)
- [NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer](#)
- [Columbia Hudson River Flooding Decision Support System mapping tool](#)
- [Scenic Hudson Sea Level Rise Viewer](#)
- [NYSERDA Coastal NY Future Floodplain Mapper](#)

Policy tools

- [NYS DOS Model Local Laws to Increase Resilience](#)
- [Wetland's Watch Rolling Easements](#)
- [Wetland's Watch Conservation Easements](#)
- [Wetland's Watch Transfer of Development Rights](#)
- [Conservation Tools Transfer of Development Rights](#)
- [Environmental Law Institute's Floodplain Buyouts: An Action Guide for Local Governments on How to Maximize Community Benefits, Habitat Connectivity, and Resilience](#)

Case studies from NY and beyond

- [Delaware County, NY Local Flood Analysis & Flood Buyout](#)
- [Town of Shandaken, NY Flood Mitigation Plan](#)
- [Soldiers Grove, WI History of the Floods](#)
- [Cedar Rapids, IA, Voluntary Property Acquisition \(Buyout\) Program](#)
- [Managed retreat from coastal erosion at Muskallonge Lake State Park, MI](#)
- [City of Coral Gables: Legal Considerations Surrounding Adaptation to the Threat of Sea Level Rise](#)

Additional links

- [FEMA Wet floodproofing](#)
- [CAKE: Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange](#)

H. Recertification Requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.