

2021 West End Flood Mitigation Study

Town of Bloomsburg

Columbia County, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC OUTREACH



PROJECT DETAILS

DIFFICULTY: Medium

COST: \$

TIMEFRAME: Ten (10) Months

DELIVERABLES: Public information tools, summary of best practices, non-structural mitigation strategy action plan, and the outreach chapter of the Flood Mitigation Study

CORE COMPETENCIES:

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Public Outreach and Education
- Best Practices Review
- Strategy Development

PROJECT TEAM

Vision Planning and Consulting
Borton-Lawson Engineering

CLIENT CONTACT

Samantha Albert, PE
Water Services Leader
613 Baltimore Drive, Ste 300
Wilkes Barre, PA 18702

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Vision Planning and Consulting (VPC) supported Columbia County by developing and executing a public outreach and stakeholder engagement strategy for the West End Flood Mitigation Study (FMS). The purpose of the strategy was to not only inform, but also to involve, consult, and collaborate with key stakeholders and local residents to garner input on challenges and potential solutions. VPC also conducted an extensive review of communities that have successfully implemented non-structural mitigation solutions to prevent or minimize the flooding of local infrastructure.

PROJECT SUMMARY

VPC supported the development of the West End Flood Mitigation Study, with the goal of improving the area's long-term flood resiliency and reducing the risk that flooding poses through property damage and loss of life. A primary objective of the study was to identify the best structural and non-structural projects that can be used by the County to reduce or mitigate flood impacts.

VPC developed a comprehensive public outreach/stakeholder engagement strategy which employed outreach efforts to achieve three goals: 1) educate stakeholders and the public on the goals and methods of the study, 2) gather information to support the development of a flood mitigation strategy, and 3) present the results of the FMS.

The strategy disseminated engagement tools and information through several outlets, including social media, newspapers, press releases, and a multi-modal survey. The Project Team conducted meetings with key stakeholders, including representatives from the municipalities of Bloomsburg, Hemlock, and Montour; the Bloomsburg Fairgrounds; and the Columbia County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The Project Team also facilitated multiple Public Meetings to inform residents regarding study findings, and to gather feedback from the community.

VPC developed and mailed a paper survey to the property owners of the 349 parcels in the study area. Owners could then either return the completed survey via mail or complete the survey online. The survey was designed to capture individuals' lived experiences with flooding to inform the evaluation of flood risks and the development of mitigation strategies. The survey achieved a 35% response rate and a summary of the results was developed to identify key takeaways and feedback for future decision making.

VPC conducted a review of mitigation reconstruction best practices that have been implemented successfully, including: buyouts, elevations, and relocations. As a substantial number of parcels in the study area are located in the floodway, special attention was paid to viable mitigation options for infrastructure in the floodway. The practices gleaned from this review were used by VPC to develop a Non-Structural Flood Mitigation Strategy that was implementable, action-oriented, and clearly connected potential flood mitigation actions with the identified risks and vulnerabilities of the study area.