

Development of a Resilience Plan for Dewey Beach

At the April 25, 2025, Town Council meeting, Commissioners voted unanimously to direct the Resiliency and Sustainability (formerly Climate Change) Committee to develop a project intended to create a resilience plan for the town. Other shore municipalities have developed such plans, and Lewes has taken the additional step of creating a resiliency fund that will aid in implementing resilience strategies and projects. Stated simply, climate resilience is the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Resilience and the Town Comprehensive Development Plan

Every 10 years, Delaware municipalities are required to prepare and submit for state approval a comprehensive development plan. Comprehensive plans provide a 10-year view of a municipality's development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population and housing growth within the jurisdiction, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent areas, redevelopment potential, community character, and the general uses of land within the community, and critical community development and infrastructure issues. Recent legislation requires that plans include "strategies which consider community resiliency and reduce the vulnerability of property, agriculture, infrastructure, and cultural and natural resources to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events. The strategies must be informed by the Delaware Climate Action Plan and Implementation Reports."

The new comprehensive plan requirements are mandatory only for municipalities with populations of at least 2,000, but smaller municipalities are encouraged to include non-mandatory items in their plans. Because the size of the summer population in Dewey Beach far exceeds the 2,000 minimum, previous plans have addressed a comprehensive set of plan requirements. The town chose to include climate change and sea-level rise as a key issue in its 2018 plan and included a policy recommendation to establish strategies for resilience. The initial stages of planning for the town's next plan due in 2028 are already underway.

The December 2025 Delaware Climate Action Plan includes extensive sections on sea-level rise and flooding and comprehensive resilience strategies for mitigation and recovery from climate-related events. Understanding the town's resilience needs will be an important foundation for developing recommendations in the new comprehensive plan that are consistent with the objectives described in the Delaware Plan.

Scope of Planned Project

The Scope of Work below is based on responses from potential contractors to several questions about similar projects conducted for other towns, the types of information needed for developing a resiliency plan, and the process to produce the plan. The selected contractor(s) will review the scope and suggest any revisions before proceeding with the project.

Scope of Work

- Meetings and Presentations with Town's Resilience and Sustainability Committee to Discuss Previous Work and Study Objectives
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
 - Meet with Town stakeholders to assess tolerance for flood risk, the planning time horizon, and sea level rise projections.
 - Collect information on how stakeholders have been affected by past flooding.
 - Define stakeholders' goals
- Risk Assessment and Vulnerability Analysis
 - Compile existing data
 - Geographic Information Survey(GIS)/topographic survey of stormwater
 - Stormwater infrastructure inspection reports
 - Additional available GIS data including Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), soils, depth to groundwater, impervious surfaces, etc.
 - Tide data
 - FEMA flood maps
 - Previous studies, including DelDOTSR1 Flood Mitigation Study
 - Previously implemented projects to mitigate flood risks
 - Climate change projections
 - Data Analysis
 - Review topographic and inundation information to determine at-risk areas of town
 - Consider what strategies may be successful in at risk areas
 - Hydrologic/hydraulic modeling
 - Develop screening criteria matrix (multi criteria decision analysis)
 - Prioritize mitigation measures and best practices
 - Property owner contact and field assessments
- Future Action Recommendations
 - Short, medium, and long-term actions
 - Policy and land use recommendations
 - Potential engineered and nature-based solutions

- Recommend education strategies to enhance understanding of flood mitigation and discourage ideas that are likely not feasible for the town.
- Prepare a final report.