

Implementing “Adaptation Action Area” Policies in Florida

A Supplemental Project of Special Merit to the Statewide Community Resiliency Initiative

The 2011 Florida Legislature passed the *Community Planning Act* (CPA) making significant changes to the state’s growth management laws, including the addition of optional adaptation planning for coastal hazards and the potential impacts of sea level rise. The Adaptation Action Area, as defined in the CPA, is an optional comprehensive plan designation for areas that experience coastal flooding and that are vulnerable to the related impacts of rising sea levels for prioritizing funding for infrastructure and adaptation planning. Local governments that adopt an adaptation action area may consider policies within the coastal management element in their comprehensive plan to improve resilience to coastal flooding. Criteria for the adaptation action area may include: areas below, at, or near mean higher high water; areas which have a hydrological connection to coastal waters; or areas designated as evacuation zones for storm surge (§163.3164(1) and §163.3177(6)(g)(10), F.S.)



In January 2011, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) approved the Florida Coastal Management Program’s (FCMP) Section 309 Strategy, including an initiative to be conducted by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) titled, “Community Resiliency: Planning for Sea Level Rise.” This five-year initiative will examine the statewide planning framework and determine how to best integrate adaptation into the existing process as well as how to coordinate adaptation efforts statewide. In addition, the initiative will vet guidance by developing adaptation plans for two pilot communities. The purpose of preparing pilot plans is to evaluate planning guidance, modeling and vulnerability analysis methodologies for statewide application, determine effective modes for communicating risks, and deliver technical assistance to support adaptation to a diverse audience.

At the time the strategy was developed, the language regarding Adaptation Action Areas had not yet been conceived or adopted into statute and therefore was not reflected in the work plan. However, this newly adopted language provides the statutory framework to promote adaptation planning for sea level rise at the local level. It also provides the authority for the DEO to offer technical assistance to communities that wish to include adaptation planning in their local comprehensive plan, as well as guidance for other communities that are interested in learning more about this planning strategy.



This supplemental project will explore the options available to local governments that wish to implement Adaptation Action Areas and policies in the local comprehensive plan. The City of Ft. Lauderdale, in cooperation with Broward County, will serve as a pilot to test the adaptation options. The results of this process will be compiled into a guidance document to assist Florida communities that choose to address Adaptation Action Areas in their local comprehensive plan.



During the first phase of the overall initiative proposed under the 309 Strategy (2011-2012), the DEO will inventory sea level rise research from around the state and nation, and identify technical assistance resources currently available to support community sea level rise planning and adaptation. The DEO will also convene a group of statewide experts to serve as the Focus Group for the overall project. In the second phase of the overall initiative (2012-2013), the DEO will identify a model for coastal inundation and best practices guidance for adaptation planning to be tested in two pilot communities in the following year. The pilot communities will be representative of the average community in Florida that has not considered adaptation and how they might holistically plan for future vulnerability.

This supplemental project to address Adaptation Action Areas will occur simultaneously with the two pilot projects included in the second phase of the 309 Strategy. The main difference between the supplemental project and the DEO's 5-year initiative is that the pilots under the 5-year strategy will represent an average community in Florida and will take a holistic approach to adaptation planning. The pilot under this application will be an advanced community on the forefront of adaptation planning in the State, ready to take on highly targeted tasks related to how adaptation action areas will be addressed in the local comprehensive plan.

First, a menu of optional program changes will be developed for local governments to choose from in order to address Adaptation Action Areas in their local comprehensive plan. These options will include, but are not limited to:

- Overlay zones/districts for special adaptation action areas.
- New or revised regulations regarding adaptation planning.
- Resolutions, executive orders and memoranda of understanding/agreement regarding future plans for areas that meet the adaptation action area criteria.
- Targeted land acquisition programs.
- Conservation easements.
- Transfer and Purchase of Development Rights Programs.
- Hazard mitigation program improvements to incorporate adaptation strategies at the local level.

Next, these options will be tested through a pilot project that will ultimately result in a proposed amendment to the local comprehensive plan that addresses sea level rise adaptation. The South Florida Regional Planning Council will serve as the consultant for this project as they work closely with these local governments and the compact on climate change and sea level rise adaptation issues. The DEO asked the City of Ft. Lauderdale, in conjunction



with Broward County, to serve as the pilot for this effort because of its involvement with the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact, a partnership between Palm Beach County, Broward County, Miami-Dade County and Monroe County. The Compact has made significant progress with setting parameters for data and analysis regarding sea level rise vulnerability in the region. In addition, the Compact was instrumental in providing the support needed to get the Adaptation Action Area language adopted into state statute. The DEO also considered it important to select a municipality, since this would involve the local comprehensive plan. The City of Ft. Lauderdale was selected due to their interest in the project and vulnerability to coastal flooding, extreme high tide and impacts of rising sea levels. Broward County will also contribute to the planning process due to the fact that it has played a strong role in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact, and has a unique oversight role over all local comprehensive planning-related decisions within its jurisdiction. Broward County also has a high level of planning and technical capacity to support this project.



In addition to the proposed amendments to the City of Ft. Lauderdale Local Comprehensive Plan, the end products from this project will include various outreach materials. These resources are to be used by the staff from the Florida DEO and its partners when providing technical assistance on addressing Adaptation Action Areas in local comprehensive plans. In order to capture the different learning styles and ways to present this information, outreach materials will include an easy-to-read guidebook with a case study, a video on adaptation action areas and podcasts with key players throughout the project. It is also expected that staff will present this information via multiple webinars and workshops in order to promote the planning tools.

