

PLANES DE MITIGACIÓN CONTRA PELIGROS NATURALES

Resiliencia Planificada



JUNTA DE PLANIFICACIÓN

2021

Municipality of Loíza

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Executive Summary

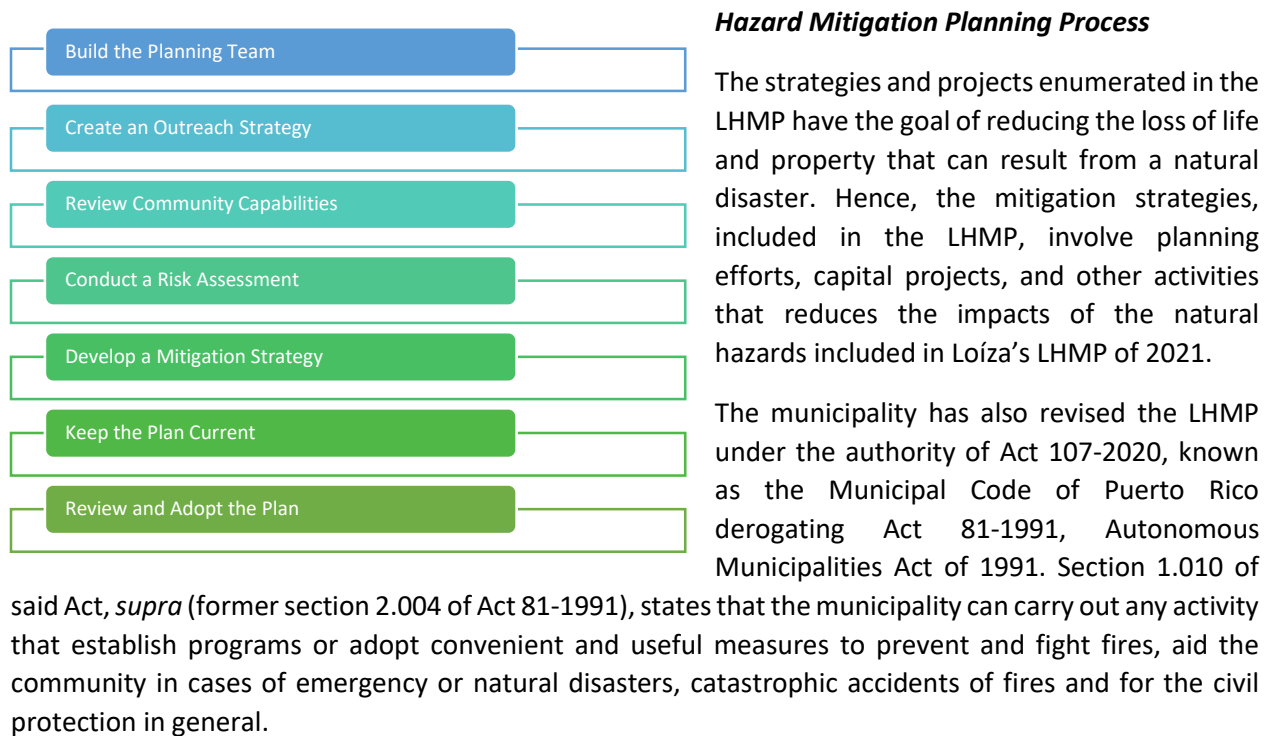


1 Introduction

The Municipality of Loíza has revised its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)¹ in accordance with the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K), which was signed into law to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988. One of the requirements that this legislation establishes is that in order for the municipality to receive federal mitigation funds, it must elaborate and adopt a Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) approved LHMP.² Also, the DMA2K promotes that the local government, together with the State, work on pre disaster planning and encourages the development of sustainable hazard mitigation activities.

These LHMPs must be revised and updated every five (5) years to remain in compliance with regulations and Federal mitigation grant conditions. This updating requirement offers the municipality an opportunity to reevaluate recommendations, monitor the implementation of mitigation strategies included in the previous Plan, monitor the impact of mitigation actions that have been implemented, and determine if any changes to the Plan need to be incorporated. This Plan complies with said regulations.

Figure 1: Hazard Mitigation Planning Process



¹ Please note that the 2020 Revised HMP was written in Spanish as per agreement between the Municipality, the Planning Board, the Governor’s Authorized Representative (GAR) and FEMA.

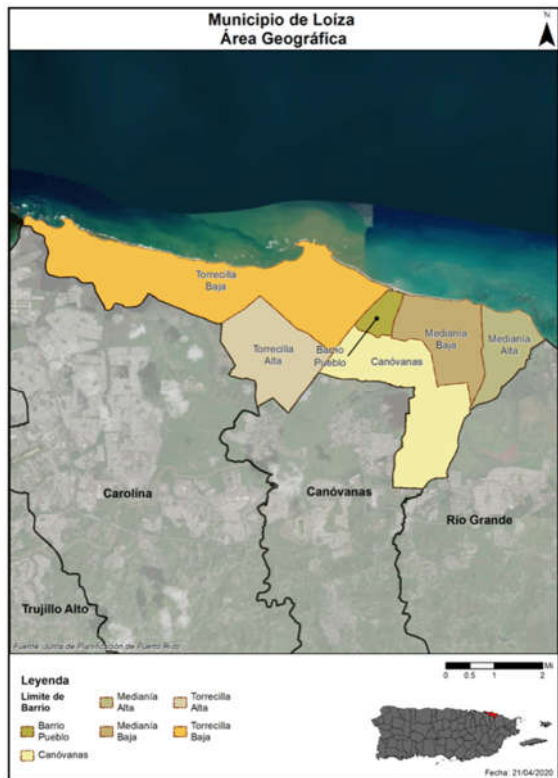
² 42 U.S.C 5165; 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.

This Executive Summary will provide an overview on:

- Loíza’s population characteristics;
- The public participation and outreach efforts with the community during the LHMP planning process;
- Loíza’s risk assessment;
- A review of the mitigation strategies, goals and LHMPs action plan; and
- Plan maintenance, and how to keep the Plan current.

2 Loíza’s Profile: Main Population Characteristics

Figure 2: Loíza and its wards



The municipality of Loíza is located in the area known as the *Llano Costero del Norte* of the Island of Puerto Rico. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean by the north, with the Municipality of Canóvanas by the south, with the Municipality of Rio Grande by the east and with the Municipality of Carolina by the west. The territorial extension of the Municipality of Loíza is approximately 25 square miles (65 square kilometers).

The municipality has six (6) official *barrios* or wards: Canóvanas, Loíza Pueblo, Medianía Alta, Medianía Baja, Torrecilla Alta y Torrecilla Baja.

Geographically, it belongs to the northern karstic zone of the island, which accounts for the prevalence of “mogotes”, sinkholes, caves and underground rivers. This characteristic is a cause of flooding problems in the Municipality. According to the 2013 USGS Topographic Map, Loíza is located between the quadrants of Rio Grande and Carolina. In the aforementioned map only a small area with an elevation of about 100 meters near the PR-188 is observed.

According to the 2010 Census, Loíza has a population of 30,060. The American Community Survey (ACS) of 2018 estimated that the population of Loíza had decreased by 3,597 inhabitants.

Table 1: Population by age group: 2010 and 2018

Population	2010 Census	2018 ACS Estimate	% Rate of Change
Younger than 5 years age	2,062	1,254	-39.19%
5 to 19 years of age	7,173	5,264	-26.61%
20 to 64 years of age	17,626	15,732	-10.75%
65 years of age and older	3,199	4,213	31.70%
Total	30,060	26,463	-11.97%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2010; American Community Survey 2013-2018 Estimates

This represents a reduction of 11.97%. Only Torrecilla Baja, one of the six wards, were estimated to have an increase in their population for 2018. For its part, for the year 2010, the Torrecilla Alta ward shows not to be habited.

Further details, regarding the profile of the municipality, can be found in Chapter 3, Section 3.2, of the updated 2020 LHMP.

3 Outreach and Public Participation

In order to guide the development of this Plan, Hon. Julia M. Nazario Fuentes, Mayor of Loíza, appointed the following officials to constitute the Mitigation Planning Committee (henceforth, the Planning Committee). The Planning Committee is comprised by representatives from several departments and citizen involvement with key roles and experience in community planning, public works, and emergency management to serve as key components in the planning process. Please refer to Section 2.5 on the LHMP.

Table 2: Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee

Name	Position	Dependency	E-mail
Hon. Julia M Nazario Fuentes	Mayor	Mayor's Office	alcaldesa@municipiodeloiza.net
Luis Rafael Ortiz Escobar	Deputy Mayor	Mayor's Office	lortiz@municipiodeloiza.net
Plan. Yeidi Mar Escobar Del Valle	Director	Planning, Territorial Planning and Economic Development	yescobar@municipiodeloiza.net
Aquilino Pizarro Osorio	Director	Municipal Emergency Management Office	apizarro@municipiodeloiza.net
Clara I. Pérez Escalera	Director	Finance Office	cperez@municipiodeloiza.net
Luis Daniel Pizarro Osorio	Director	Federal Programs	lpizarro@municipiodeloiza.net
Jerry Rodríguez Morales	Director	Public Works Office	jrodriguez@municipiodeloiza.net
Nazario Lugo Burgos	Consultant	Municipal Emergency Management Office	nlugo@amepspr.com
Ing. Celso L. González Escobar	Resident	Community	Private.
Ariam Luis Torres Cordero	Student	Community	Private.

The Planning Committee activities included: (1) updating the list of the municipality assets and local critical facilities; (2) updating the status of the previous LHMP mitigation strategies; (3) determine possible new mitigation strategies for the 2021 LHMP; (4) development and implementation of public participation and outreach activities and stakeholders at large such as neighboring municipalities, governmental agencies; (5) announce the municipality's LHMP efforts to agencies, stakeholders and public feedback for Loíza's LHMP 2021 draft version and incorporate such comments on the Plan.

An initial notice was published on a local newspaper (Primera Hora), and on the Facebook page of the municipality. Said notice informed the public about the first Public Participation meeting to be held on September 10, 2020. A second notice was published regarding the publication of the 2021 LHMP draft version for review providing 25 days period for review, submit comments, and the opportunity to participate in a second community meeting held on November 24, 2020. A draft version of the 2021 LHMP was made available on the Puerto Rico Planning Board’s (PRPB) website (jp.pr.gov).

4 Loíza’s Risk Assessment

After reviewing the natural hazards identified as priorities on the previous Loíza’s 2014 LHMP, the Municipal Emergency Response Plan, the municipality’s disaster history, and other literature related to potential future hazards, the Planning Committee identified the following hazards in the 2021 LHMP; (1) Sea Level Rise, (2) Drought, (3) Earthquakes, (4) Flooding, (5) Landslides, (6) Strong Winds (Tropical Cyclones), (7) Tsunami (8) Coastal Erosion, (9) Strom Surge, and (10) Wildfire. Discussion of these natural hazards are included in the 2021 LHMP’s Chapter 4. In addition, the 2021 LHMP includes a quantitative vulnerability analysis based on the best available data for Loíza and Puerto Rico accounting for future development to assess mitigation strategies to prevent repetitive and severe property loss.

This assessment served as a key tool for the Planning Committee and the public to identify and prioritize potential mitigation strategies by focusing attention on areas that present the greatest risk of damages to people, critical facilities, and normal municipality operations. The analysis for earthquake, flood, landslides, and high winds was performed by assessing the potential impacts from each hazard using geographic information system data (GIS).

By ranking each section, the municipality was in position to determine an overall risk classification. It is important to mention that this classification exercise resulted from the municipality’s 2021 LHMP technical risk assessment along with a capability gap analysis and the local community input, which is based on previous natural events experienced by the Planning Committee and the residents and business owners of Loíza.

The following table provides a summary of the risk classification for each identified hazard. Part of the process of completing the next appraisal required input from the community as well as from the Committee. Beyond the risk analysis, this table presents the municipality’s prioritization analysis.

Table 3: Natural Hazard Ranking

Natural Hazard	Risk to people	Risk to facilities	Risk to operations	Classification
Sea Level Rise	3	3	3	High
Drought	3	1	2	Moderate
Earthquake/Liquefaction	3	3	3	High
Flooding	3	3	3	High
Landslide	1	1	1	Low

Natural Hazard	Risk to people	Risk to facilities	Risk to operations	Classification
Strong Winds/Tropical Cyclones	3	3	3	High
Tsunami	3	3	3	High
Storm Surge	3	2	3	High
Coastal Erosion	3	3	3	High
Wildfire	2	2	2	Moderate

Source: Planning Committee 2019-2020

High=3, Moderate=2, Low=1

Currently, the potential risks with the highest classification or greater impact identified for the municipality are seven: (1) sea level rise, (2) earthquake/liquefaction, (3) flooding, (4) strong winds, (5) tsunami. (6) storm surge and (7) coastal erosion.

A ranking methodology was adopted to develop the mitigation strategies based on these risks as discussed on Chapter 6 and are divided into the following categories: (1) Prevention, (2) Property Protection, (3) Natural Resources Protection, (4) Structural Projects, (5) Emergency Services, and (6) Education and Public Awareness. The strategy category with most mitigation actions is “Structural Projects” with a total of 66 mitigation projects. Flooding, strong winds, storm surge and coastal erosion are the natural hazards that are most addressed within the mitigation actions.

5 Mitigation Strategies, Goals, and Action Plan

The municipal capabilities, along with the risk assessment, serve as a foundation for the design, development and implementation of mitigation strategies. Mitigation strategies, found in Chapter 6, consist of a broad amount of local goals and strategies. The local mitigation actions were gathered from the 2016 LHMP and were incorporated into the current LHMP. This chapter provides information about the assigned implementation mechanisms and target completion dates. The sections in this chapter are designed to make the Plan strategic by identifying long-term goals, and functional, by identifying short term and immediate actions that will guide the daily local decision-making process and project implementation.

Mitigation goals consist of general guidelines that explain what the Municipality of Loíza wants to achieve in terms of hazards and mitigation. Thus, the goals included in the 2021 LHMP, offer the Planning Committee and the communities a framework for identifying, prioritizing and implementing actions to reduce the risks associated to natural hazards in Loíza.

Mitigation strategies are activities, projects, measures, or processes that Loíza will adopt in order to reduce or eliminate risk to people and property from hazards. Consequently, Loíza reviewed and revised the criteria adopted in the 2016 LHMP to analyze and prioritize potential mitigation strategies for the municipality. In order to developed the actions, the Planning Committee used the following criteria: (1) the potential of the strategy to reduce expected future damages and/or losses; (2) the capacity of the municipality to implement the action within the 5-year cycle of the Plan; (3) support from the public, agencies, municipal departments, amongst others; and (4) the potential of the action to increase resiliency of Loíza and its residents. Accordingly, the Planning Committee adopted these criteria, the results from

the risk assessment, and the feedback from local and neighboring communities to prioritize each mitigation strategy that was contained in this LHMP.

The following summarizes some of the strategies intended to mitigate these hazards:

- Promoting the purchase of NFIP insurance to the inhabitants of flood prone areas.
- Create a local register of people with difficulty with access and mobility.
- Conduct a hydraulic hydrological study (H-H Study) for improvements in the runoff system of the municipality.
- Create and keep up-to-date a digital, georeferenced inventory using a geographic information system (GIS) of the critical and governmental infrastructure, as well as identified vulnerable areas.
- Use of GIS and GPS to create detailed maps of buildings located in known hazard prone areas.
- Erosion control projects at all the coastal of Loíza for energy dissipation, beach protection and restoration of dunes.
- Continue evaluating the need for structural and non-structural mitigation actions to protect critical and governmental facilities from the threat of strong winds and rain (storm surge).

6 Maintenance to Keep the Plan Current

Chapter 7 details the revision and monitoring process in great extent. The formal maintenance process, identified by the Planning Committee, aims to keep the document viable and current, as it is a living document that shall reflect the hazards and realities affecting its community, and how to plan and prepare ahead in the event of a natural disaster. The Plan maintenance process provides the procedures for evaluation and review every year during its 5-year life cycle. Evaluation will include a review of the mitigation action plan implementation, continued public involvement through the Plan's life cycle, as required by federal legislation. As part of the review process, the members of the Planning Committee. In the event of a major natural disaster affecting the island and/or municipality, an emergency meeting must be scheduled, and the Plan should be updated or amended, as necessary, bypassing the 5-year term. The Planning Office of the municipality will coordinate with other municipal dependencies, as needed, to achieve the goals and objectives stated in this LHMP.

Finally, the municipality will promote continued public participation during the plan maintenance by, including, but not limited to (Refer to Section 7.4 of the LHMP):

- Making sure to coordinate meetings between those involved in the Plan maintenance process, which will take place at the beginning of the third quarter of each fiscal year and after each natural disaster occurring in the jurisdiction of Loíza.
- Prepare the Reports of the Plan Progress Analysis, which will be presented and discussed in meetings with the people involved in the Plan maintenance process.
- Review whether there were changes in the Act, regulatory agency regulations, which affect the Plan in one way or another, as well as budget allocations that may affect the development of projects programmed for communities.
- Ensure that applications for funds for the development of the activities described in the Plan to be made by the municipality are included in the budget of the relevant fiscal year.
- Identify opportunities to access funds.
- Establish the program-specific Work Plan, based on the schedule and goals set out in the Plan.

7 Plan Approval and Adoption

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed review of the Municipality of Loíza's Hazard Mitigation Plan, based on the standards pursuant to title 44 C.F.R. Section 201 as authorized by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2k). The Plan received a satisfactory rating for all required criteria and was approved as approvable pending adoption (APA) on July 7, 2021. Accordingly, the Municipality of Loíza, adopted said Plan on August 13, 2021 via Executive Order No. 3, Series 2021-2022.

Upon receiving the record of adoption from the municipality, FEMA issued an Official Approval Letter that dates from August 27, 2021, stating the jurisdiction has adopted said Plan, thus, approved and eligible for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs. The Plan was formally approved by FEMA on August 24, 2021. The approval letter establishes the expiration date five (5) years from the date of approval, or until August 23, 2026.