

Public Outreach Technical Advisory Committee

Effective communication is one of the most significant roles of government after a disaster, especially during long-term redevelopment when the media focus has decreased. The Hillsborough County Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP) can identify, before a disaster, the needs for public outreach that will occur during long-term post-disaster redevelopment and the methods that can be used to successfully inform or involve the public in redevelopment activities. In addition, efforts to educate businesses, community organizations, and the media of the county's redevelopment plans for recovery can be included in the PDRP. The purpose of this Public Outreach Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is to develop initiatives for effective and inclusive public outreach, both pre-disaster and post-disaster, that corresponds with the other TACs' recommended redevelopment actions.

Post-Disaster Redevelopment Issues for Public Outreach

Below are the Public Outreach Technical Advisory Committee's prioritized issues with a brief description of each.

1. **Effective and clear communication to all affected groups** – It is extremely important that the entire community is kept informed about the status of redevelopment and recovery after a disaster. This includes residents and businesses that stayed in Hillsborough County and those who have temporarily relocated. Every effort should be made to inform special populations, such as persons with disabilities or those who use languages other than English.
2. **Pre-established outreach methods, traditional and non-traditional** - Developing outreach methods before a disaster allows for timely communication with the public, which can reassure the community and ease tensions. Pre-establishing outreach methods could also free up time and more quickly secure funding during recovery. Various methods should be employed, from basic to new technology, to ensure that messages are communicated as effectively as possible based on the circumstances.
3. **Establishment of well-distributed redevelopment information centers** – Strategically located information centers can ensure that the whole of the population is kept up-to-date on redevelopment decisions and receiving information needed for smart rebuilding and long-term recovery. These information centers may be co-located with other recovery services.
4. **Clear and effective cross-communication among governments (local, state, federal)** – A lack of clear cross-communication between government agencies will cause repetition of roles and responsibilities, gaps in services, and confusion among the public. Government agencies need to create a successful communication system in order for them to work together in an efficient and effective manner over the whole timeframe of recovery, and not just the short-term recovery period in which the Emergency Operations Center is the center of coordination efforts.

5. **Opportunity for public participation in redevelopment decisions** – While community involvement may not be feasible in the immediate recovery stage of a disaster due to mobility, displacement, and basic needs constraints, public participation in long-term recovery decisions is imperative to keep community ties strong and avoid a disenfranchised citizenry in the future.
6. **Public understanding of redevelopment policies before a disaster** – While the government understands the importance of a complete and honest exchange with the public during important decisions that affect the community, the redevelopment phase is not the best time for lengthy public protest of redevelopment policies. It is ideal, therefore, if the public is aware of all redevelopment policies before a disaster and that they have a chance to voice any opposition in advance so that delays of the recovery process can be avoided as much as possible.
7. **Transparency in redevelopment decisions and activities** – The public will be more likely to accept redevelopment decisions if the decision-making and funding disbursement processes are transparent. Transparency also cultivates an atmosphere of trust between the public and government officials, which contributes to a quicker, smoother, and more efficient recovery process. During post-disaster recovery periods, it may take a greater effort for local government actions to be transparent since typical methods of communication may have changed, residents may not be in the area or could be distracted by many other post-disaster concerns, and some decisions will need to be made quickly to not delay redevelopment progress.
8. **Defense and promotion of area's viability/ability to re-build** – Population return is imperative for a community and its economy to recover from a disaster. After a disaster, the County needs to promote a clear and positive message about the area's viability and ability to rebuild to encourage residents and businesses to return to their neighborhoods at the appropriate time and to feel safe in their communities.