



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | Office of Community Planning and Development

Climate Resilience Implementation Guide

Community Driven Relocation





Community-driven Relocation

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Planning and Development (CPD) grantees are in a unique position to increase community resilience to climate change. Community members with low and moderate incomes (LMIs) are disproportionately affected by climate change because they are less able to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of extreme events and natural hazards.^{1,2} Recognizing these risks, HUD issued a rule in 2016 that requires grantees to recognize the need for resilience to natural hazard risks in their Consolidated Plans. To support grantees in this work, HUD hosts a [Supporting Local Climate Action webpage](#) that contains resources on how to use HUD funding to build more resilient communities.

The **Community Resilience Toolkit** provides information on potential impacts from six climate hazards and identifies a broad range of resilience actions that local and state governments can implement to address these risks.

Six **Implementation Guides** provide step-by-step instructions on how to implement specific resilience programs:

- Resilience Education and Outreach Activities
- Cool Roofs
- Nature-based Solutions
- Single-family Retrofits
- Resilient Public Facilities
- Community-driven Relocation

About Community-driven Relocation as a Resilience Action

This document provides a step-by-step guide for HUD grantees to scope community-driven relocation as a solution to multiple natural hazards. Community-driven relocation involves moving a community or portions of a community away from a hazard prone area to a new location with lesser exposure to hazards or their impacts.³

Community-driven relocation can occur proactively or reactively and can vary widely in scale. For example, it could include actions such as removing select buildings or critical infrastructure with social and economic significance or moving entire neighborhoods or communities. Such actions are often accompanied by restrictions to ensure no future development occurs in high-risk areas and that land is conserved for natural ecosystem functions and/or recreation.*

Community-driven relocation is typically a resilience action of last resort. The United Nations report [Planned Relocation, Disasters and Climate Change](#) identifies several enabling conditions for community-driven relocation: imminent danger to the community, repetitive loss of homes and infrastructure, lack of other adaptation options, a high percentage of homes in danger, increasing hazard trends, downward socio-economic trends, disruption to basic needs (e.g., clean water), and disruption to basic services (e.g., education, transit).

Communities exploring relocation typically approach decision-making in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Place is often associated with social, cultural, and economic significance. Meaningful community engagement and input are critical; implementation of community-driven relocation must strive to minimize negative impacts, promote human rights, maintain human dignity, protect the environment and cultural heritage, and achieve equitable outcomes.⁴

To better understand community-driven relocation, explore these additional resources.

- [Managed Retreat Toolkit \(Georgetown Climate Center\)](#)
- [Leaving Place, Restoring Home \(Platform on Disaster Displacement\)](#)

* A note on selected terminology appears at the end of this guide.



Types of Community-driven Relocation

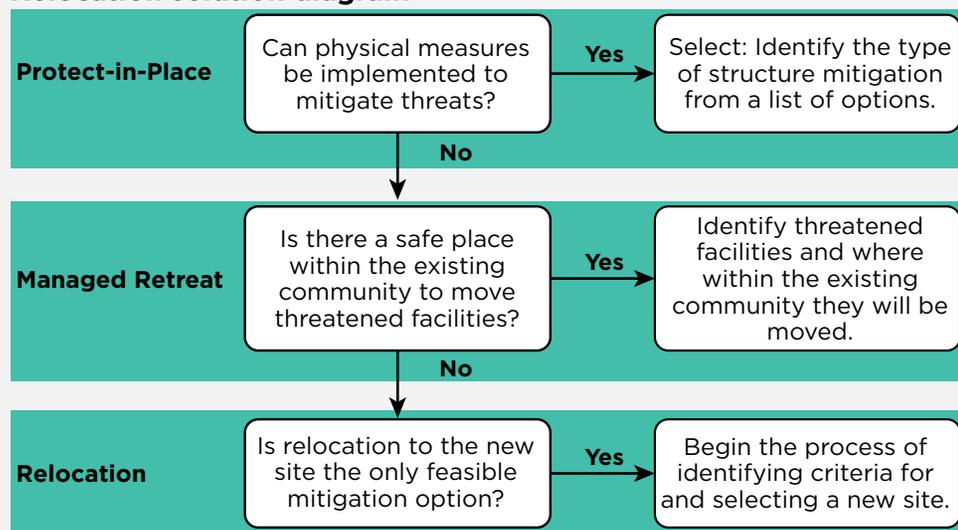
Community-driven relocation is often preceded by efforts to remain in place, as shown in the diagram. **Protect-in-place** uses natural measures (e.g., wetlands), hardscape measures (e.g., levees), structural rehabilitation or stabilization, or other adaptation measures to minimize future impacts, allowing communities to remain in their current location.⁵ Protect-in-place measures, including nature-based solutions, are featured in other [Community Resilience Implementation Guides](#).

This guide covers two types of relocation, when protecting buildings or critical infrastructure in-place is not an option.

Community managed retreat strives to remove the most at-risk community members from the affected areas, but may not prioritize relocating members as part of the effort. This solution typically occurs in areas that face repetitive losses from a hazard such as localized flooding.

Community planned relocation strives to keep communities intact and relocate the entire affected population to a new, predetermined location away from the current site. [Several examples exist in Alaska Native communities](#) in response to erosion and subsidence due to sea level rise and thawing permafrost.

Relocation solution diagram⁶



Potential Obstacles and Opportunities

Community-driven relocation is complex and associated with concerns related to the loss of identity, culture, and livelihoods. Simultaneously, it may offer communities the opportunity to re-envision or devise new aspects of community well-being.

Potential Opportunities

Community: By redefining “home” and “community” the relocation process prioritizes values and assets, and ensures they exist in the plan.

Environment: Often involves reclaiming, restoring, or preserving green space that can support hardy native vegetation.

Health and Well-being: May improve economic, physical, and mental health by moving community members out of harm’s way or ensuring access to basic services (e.g., water, sanitation).

Recreation: May create green space for community parks and trails.

Livelihoods: Should seek to preserve employment opportunities or generate new opportunities with a living/prevaling wage.

Equity: May create opportunities to address past inequalities.

Cohesion: Whole-community relocation may keep communities intact both socially and physically, so no community members are left behind.

Potential Obstacles

Culture and Identity: Place is associated with culture and identity. Potential loss may be lessened through intentional planning processes.

Consensus Building: Consent is a core principle in planned relocation; including all community members supports consensus building.

Funding: Aligning funding involves navigating a complex set of multiple sources, each with their own requirements and provisions.

Location: Determining a new community location is complex; attempt to match community needs with acquiring new land.

Livelihoods: Loss of livelihoods must be analyzed, including the potential for new job opportunities.

Equity: Community members with LMIs or other high-risk groups deserve just and fair compensation to relocate with positive outcomes.

Time: Prepare for long-term program design and implementation, often spanning over a decade.

Remainders: Community members opting to stay in place and not accept buyouts may be left amid a patchwork of abandoned properties.



Relocation Mechanisms

There are multiple mechanisms communities can use to implement their goals. [Georgetown Climate Center's Toolkit](#) suggests four categories of mechanisms for community-driven relocation.

Infrastructure relocation involves moving existing infrastructure or prioritizing placement of new infrastructure such as roads, bridges, power lines, and water and sewer lines out of harm's way. This practice could also include **selective disinvestment**, where infrastructure is abandoned over time.

Acquisition includes the four activities below to clear people and buildings from high-risk areas.*

- [Buyouts](#) voluntarily acquire commercial and residential properties located in high-risk areas with the intent to demolish the structures and create park amenities, open space, or flood storage/overflow areas. Buyouts are often a managed retreat practice in response to repeat hazard events. Removal of structures on purchased properties reduces future risks to people, businesses, and infrastructure. HUD funds may be used for voluntary buyout programs resulting in open space in eligible areas (HUD).
- [Land conservation](#) is the long-term protection and management of unused or underused land resources, such as open space, farmland, and forest land. In the context of community-driven relocation, this practice may conserve formerly developed land or protect undeveloped land from future development to allow for natural ecosystem functions (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)).
- [Land banking](#) occurs when a governmental or non-profit authority acquires, maintains, and stabilizes vacant, abandoned, or tax-delinquent properties while working with other entities to promote the productive reuse of the properties. In the context of community-driven relocation, land banking may seek to conserve land with no future development or land banking can be used to acquire land for relocation of community assets (EPA).
- [Land swaps](#) allow a community to trade a government owned site with a privately owned site to enable development on land that faces fewer hazards (World Bank).

Regulation may include zoning or other changes that restrict how land or structures are used, (re)developed, or levied.

- [Setbacks or buffers](#) from high hazard areas are used to keep development out of harm's way. Setback standards establish minimum distances that structures must be positioned (or set back) from hazard areas (e.g., river channels, coastal shorelines). Setbacks can be defined by vertical heights or horizontal distances (Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)).
- [Permit conditions](#) require construction approval for all development in the community, allowing officials to determine whether construction or other development is in hazard-prone areas (FEMA).
- [Rolling setbacks or easements](#) remove buildings, roads, and other structures from land as it becomes impacted (e.g., as shorelines erode or sea level rises to a certain threshold, occupants must leave) (EPA).
- [Zoning overlays](#) dictate land use practices such as density and new development. Specific land uses and/or design standards may apply to a portion of the zone (e.g., the wildland urban interface) (EPA).
- [Building codes and standards](#) establish construction criteria to protect structures from hazards such as flooding, coastal storms, wildfire, and other severe weather hazards. [Building Science](#) informs these codes and may apply to the area being vacated and/or the new location (National Fire Protection Association).
- [Taxes, assessments, and fees](#) across levels of government are collected (or reappropriated) to address costs associated with climate change impacts, resilience, or relocation measures (Association of Bay Area Governments).

*References to acquisition in this guide are voluntary, unless otherwise noted.



Relocation Mechanisms, continued

Market-based tools offer financial incentives or penalties to encourage relocation.

- [Transfer of development rights](#) allow landowners to retain legal title to their land but sell its development rights for use on other properties enabling development on land that faces fewer hazards (NY Division of Local Government Services).
- [Tax credits](#) reduce the amount of taxes owed or increase a tax refund. Property tax credits may be used to entice property owners to relocate (Internal Revenue Service).
- [Insurance premiums](#) are a flat charge that the policyholder must pay on each policy covering a property. The availability of hazard insurance or increasing insurance premiums may affect decisions to locate or remain in high-hazard areas (FEMA).
- [Credit rating](#) agencies may change community ratings based on assessments of community risk and resilience, affecting their ability to borrow financing and invest in infrastructure (Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board).



Tip! Relocation mechanisms must be coordinated across community agencies (e.g., land management, economic development, emergency management) by instituting consistent or complementary provisions and practices. This is often achieved by integrating efforts into plans across agencies.

Example Community-driven Relocation Resilience Options



Sea Level Rise and Coastal Storms

Develop a land banking program for the preservation of natural and beneficial functions of flood hazard areas.



Inland Flooding

Create a buyout program to acquire, demolish, and relocate residences and businesses located in high-risk areas. Prioritize structures located in high-risk, and low- and moderate-income areas. HUD provides [guidelines for state-funded voluntary property buyout programs](#) to assist property owners who wish to relocate their homes and businesses away from the threat of flooding.



Wildfire

Consider [zoning changes or special wildfire overlay districts](#) to expand fire safety standards and control new construction in the wildland urban interface.



Erosion and Landslides

Use transfer of development rights to allow developers to increase densities on parcels with low risk in return for keeping hazard-prone areas vacant.



Federal Community-driven Relocation Support

Implementation of community-driven relocation solutions may be an eligible activity and include allowable costs under the following authorities.

HUD Opportunities

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program

Activities associated with community-driven relocation may be supported using CDBG or Section 108 Loan Guarantee funds. These activities could be eligible as Acquisition of Real Property, Public Facilities and Improvements or Clearance, or Optional Relocation, depending upon the specific choice of activities. CDBG funds are allocated annually by formula to states and local government grantees. The Section 108 Loan Guarantee program allows CDBG grantees to leverage their annual grant allocation to access low-cost, flexible financing for a variety of eligible activities, including public facilities, and infrastructure projects.

CDBG Disaster Recovery (DR)

Following a Presidentially-declared disaster, Congress may appropriate funds to address significant unmet needs for long-term recovery. The special appropriation provides funds to the most impacted and distressed areas for disaster relief, long term-recovery, restoration of infrastructure, housing, and economic revitalization. These funds could be used by eligible CDBG-DR grantees for activities associated with community-driven relocation.

CDBG Mitigation (MIT)

Eligible grantees (typically limited to those that have already received CDBG-DR funding) may use mitigation assistance in areas impacted by recent disasters to carry out strategic and high-impact activities to mitigate disaster risks and reduce future losses. Mitigation activities are defined as those that increase resilience to disasters and reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of loss of life, injury, damage to and loss of property and suffering and hardship by lessening the impact of future disasters.

Explore related HUD resources.

- [CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT Grantee-Led Sessions \(HUD\)](#)
- [CDBG-DR Buyout Program Design and Implementation Toolkit \(HUD\)](#)
- [CDBG-DR Program \(HUD\)](#)
- [CDBG-MIT Program \(HUD\)](#)
- [Disaster Recovery Library: Buyout \(HUD\)](#)
- [Real Estate Acquisition and Relocation \(HUD\)](#)

Other Federal Opportunities

Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA)

For federally funded acquisition projects or programs, the URA establishes minimum requirements for property acquisition and for persons – including people, businesses, and farms – who are displaced as a direct result of acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition. The URA's key objectives are to ensure that people whose property is acquired, or who must move for a federally funded project are treated in a uniform, fair, and equitable manner, and receive assistance in moving from the property they occupy. The URA's implementing regulations appear in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): [49 CFR § 24](#). The URA may apply to community resilience programs. For additional information, resources, and training on the URA, visit HUD's [Real Estate Acquisition and Relocation website](#).



Federal Community-driven Relocation Support, continued

FEMA Opportunities

FEMA administers funding for disaster-related property buyouts and acquisitions through hazard mitigation programs. These programs purchase properties that are disaster-prone, remove the buildings, and maintain the land as open space. These programs use a community cost-share structure.

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program

BRIC is a competitive grant program annually appropriated to support states, local communities, tribes, and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects. The program funds cost-effective projects designed to increase resilience, reduce injuries and loss of life, and reduce damage and destruction to property. Eligible applicants can use BRIC funding for property acquisition.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

HMGP assists communities in rebuilding to become more resilient. HMGP funds mitigation projects including acquisition of hazard prone homes and businesses which enable owners to relocate to safer areas. This grant funding is available after a Presidentially-declared disaster.

Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program

FMA is a competitive grant program that provides funding to states, local communities, federally recognized tribes, and territories. Funds can be used for projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program, including property buyouts. Funding for FMA is annually appropriated.

Explore related FEMA resources.

- [Benefit-Cost Analysis Toolkit \(FEMA\)](#)
- [BRIC Grant Program Webinars \(FEMA\)](#)
- [FMA Grant Program \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Guidance \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Mitigation Action Portfolio \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Hazard Mitigation Regulations and Guidance \(FEMA\)](#)
- [HMGP \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Implementation Guidance for Use of CDBG-DR as Non-Federal Cost Share for Public Assistance \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Making the Connection to the Coast \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Mitigation Framework Leadership Group \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Nature-Based Solutions \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Pre-disaster Mitigation \(FEMA\)](#)



Step 1: Determine Community-driven Relocation Priorities



Several enabling conditions exist for community-driven relocation including repetitive loss of homes and infrastructure, lack of other adaptation options, a high percentage of homes in danger, increasing hazard trends, and disruption to basic needs and services. To begin a relocation program, stakeholders must come together to determine community priorities. Since community-driven relocation is typically an option of last resort, communities considering this resilience action will typically understand the pertinent natural hazard(s) affecting the community, and how climate change might exacerbate these hazards.

Beginning conversations with counterparts and community members may be difficult and sensitive, but must occur from the outset. Community-driven relocation as a resilience action is complex, and there are no one-size-fits-all approaches. Solutions and processes will vary depending on the local context.

Identify existing resources. Community stakeholders may have information on local natural hazard risks and resilience priorities (e.g., disaster, climate, resilience, or sustainability plans; people involved in creating such plans; local and regional non-governmental organizations; land trusts; community-based organizations). Such resources are often a good place to identify existing local resilience priorities and may help determine whether community-driven relocation is a possible solution.

Identify preliminary stakeholders. Particularly where limited background resources exist for critical natural hazards, engage stakeholders to identify if community-driven relocation is a suitable resilience solution. Common stakeholders appear in the figure. Community-driven relocation solutions typically involve all levels of government, and multiple agencies or departments. Early on, reach out and determine existing activities across local, state, federal, and tribal government agencies.

Identify and reach out to other communities that have implemented community-driven relocation. For example, program managers in Louisiana consider relocation as an option earlier than many jurisdictions. Learn about their efforts on the next page.

[The Climate Explorer](#) offers graphs and maps of historical and projected climate variables for any county in the contiguous United States. This may be helpful in identifying the trajectory of hazard(s) affecting the community.

Sample universe of stakeholders

Community and Organizations

- Community members
- Land trusts
- Faith-based organizations
- Non-profits
- Neighborhood/homeowners associations
- Other community/volunteer groups

Business and Industry

- Businesses
- Chambers of commerce
- Labor unions
- Trade groups
- Real estate associations
- Insurance companies
- Hospitals/healthcare
- Utilities

Local, State, Federal, and Tribal Government

- Economic development, commerce, or labor
- Education
- Emergency management
- Environment or land management
- Health, housing, and social service
- Infrastructure agencies
- Legal



Resilience in Practice

Isle de Jean Charles, LA | Relocation After Coastal Storms and Land Loss

Isle de Jean Charles, LA is a narrow island and the traditional home of 300 families in the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. Due to sea level rise, coastal storms, and surrounding development,⁷ over 20,000 acres of land have eroded or subsided into the Gulf of Mexico; only 320 acres remain. While land loss has occurred over decades, planning for the [Isle De Jean Charles Resettlement](#) began in 2016 after the State of Louisiana obtained a federal grant to design and implement a voluntary retreat program. With input from community members, the final resettlement program strives to maintain community cohesion and safety.

The relocation efforts are primarily funded by a HUD grant awarded to the State of Louisiana through the National Disaster Resilience Competition. The program is administered by the Louisiana Division of Administration's Office of Community Development.

The three-phase resettlement program actively engages the community to build trust between residents and program staff.

- [Phase I](#) consisted of a land use and infrastructure survey of the island, community meetings, and resident interviews to collect input on desired qualities for a new site.
- [Phase II](#) evaluated sites within the community's parish. Residents visited potential sites and provided input on the location. In 2018, residents selected "The New Isle;" 515 acres of land 40 miles north of the island. In 2019, Hurricane Barry caused major damage to the island; many residents moved into temporary housing on the mainland with rental assistance in anticipation of moving into The New Isle as soon as possible.
- [Phase III](#) is underway as of 2022; the master plan includes building homes and infrastructure. The first 12 families closed on their new homes and moved in.

Trusted partners are vital to the relocation process. Island residents, tribal members from Isle de Jean Charles band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and the United Houma Nation and other stakeholders participated in the Resettlement Master Plan. This community

engagement is critical to the success of the planning process. The Louisiana Land Trust retained land rights while the plans for the new site were developed. Other important partners include the local parish, an academic advisory committee, and private companies providing financial management, training, and communications materials. The Office of Community Development assigned full time staff and holds monthly meetings helping facilitate the process and alleviating some apprehension in the community.

Challenges and lessons are many. From the perspective of the Office of Community Development, the program faces rising building costs, and additional funding may be needed if more families join the program. While resettlement is open to everyone who lived on the island at the time of Hurricane Isaac, there is reluctance to move from a few families. The program will remain open as long as possible within the constraints of the period of performance. While most communities consider relocation an option of last resort, from the lessons learned here, the Office of Community Development intends to include relocation among the resilience options in early planning stages. Through this process the community members created a toolkit for others to learn from their experience: [Preserving Our Place - A Community Field Guide to Engagement, Resilience, and Resettlement](#).



The New Isle (Louisiana Office of Community Development)



Step 2: Identify and Engage Collaborators and Community



Starting a discourse with community partners on community-driven relocation may be complex and charged. Community members and partners should drive the process with government agencies, staff, and officials in a role to respect, listen, understand, and facilitate consensus decisions.

Involve a broad range of stakeholders. Many groups and individuals will have a stake in community-driven relocation. Stakeholders may span income, ability, age, gender, race, and other demographic spectrums; and historically marginalized communities are often the most impacted. Keep in mind, targeted messaging may be important for outreach to organizations representing or comprised of LMI community members as they may have higher priority concerns than resilience, such as meeting basic needs related to housing, nourishment, employment, childcare, or transportation. Consider how to engage these partners and collaborators using [Lead with Listening: A Guidebook for Community Conversations on Climate Migration](#).

Agree on a decision-making process. As noted in the United Nations report [Planned Relocation, Disasters and Climate Change](#), establish an agreed-upon decision-making process, including determining who are the decision-makers, how decisions are made (e.g., consensus, majority, criteria), and who is bound by the decisions. Seeds for Change presents one model for consensus making in its [Introduction to Consensus Decision Making guide](#). Setting these ground rules builds a common vernacular. While this guide uses the term “community-driven relocation” there are other terms for this resilience approach. Find a framing that resonates in your context and enhances constructive discourse. These early stages may also inform the creation of a workgroup or taskforce with different stakeholders to inform the planning and engagement process.

Establish a platform to exchange information. Create an information hub to share and receive information with community members and partners. In communities where reliable internet access is an issue or where segments of the community are not adept internet users, establish alternative means of sharing information. Include information written in plain language and translated into the languages commonly spoken. Ensure information is available and accessible to those with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Engage throughout. Engage stakeholders throughout the prioritization, design, implementation, and evaluation of community-driven relocation solutions. Education and outreach are critical aspects of all community resilience activities. Consider using a process that seeks mutual respect, includes all points of view, and uses all kinds of knowledge. The companion implementation guide on [Resilience Education and Outreach Activities](#) offers a series of steps and vetted resources to design complementary activities that foster knowledge and understanding, garner support, and promote your community-driven relocation work.

Learn more about engaging with stakeholders.

- [Community Participation & Equitable Engagement Toolkit \(HUD\)](#)
- [Resilience Education and Outreach Activities Implementation Guide \(HUD\)](#)
- [Co-Design Principles \(Louisiana’s Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments\)](#)

Personal Motivations for Relocation

Several factors influence community members’ decisions to take part in relocation.⁸

- Income level, and the (in)ability to withstand future impacts financially
- Experience with disasters
- Perceived risk of future impacts
- Social and cultural connections
- Sense of transparency and trust
- Ease of access to community-based services



Step 3: Set Goals and Assess Feasibility



With partners and collaborators, build a shared vision of success, and what community-driven relocation solution will enhance resilience. Resilience goals do not need to be constrained to natural hazards. For example, a relocation solution could also address well-being and livelihoods.

Goal setting weighs the opportunities and obstacles of each mechanism. For example, buyouts and relocation for community members living in the most at-risk zones might gain consensus, but could leave other community members at-risk. Or a land swap to a safe and habitable area may be viable, but could be far from livelihoods. Such complexities make it important to explore multiple solutions and mechanisms, including factors that improve livelihoods, equity, or quality of life. Ensure there are multiple relocation options and allow stakeholders to propose alternatives.

Use the shared vision and the community's agreed-upon decision-making process to establish the community-driven relocation goal. For this narrowed goal, conduct preliminary feasibility assessments. Feasibility assessments cover many factors to select a viable site.

- **Legal assessments** to establish the authority for the intended option and explore options to purchase or transfer land rights. The community of Newtok, AK, found that acquiring land rights took years longer than expected. Learn about their efforts on the next page.
- **Community acceptance assessments** such as gathering input or buy-in on the location. For example, distance may be a factor to allow residents to remain close to livelihoods and culture, but far enough to minimize exposure to future hazards.
- **Social assessments** to determine the viability of livelihoods, education, and public health. Ensure equal access for all members of the community, including older adults and individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities (e.g., access to clinics or schools).
- **Land and environmental assessments** to evaluate the potential areas for relocation are safe from hazards. This could include land surveys, water quality/supply testing, and other environmental or geologic reviews.

- **Climate resilience assessments** to determine how conditions might change. Use climate assessments to ensure the new location is not hazard prone, including detailed or downscaled climate change assessments.
- **Financial feasibility assessments** to ensure availability of sufficient funds to support the selected action, or to [compare the costs and benefits of different options](#).
- **Equity assessments** to ensure all stakeholders can be appropriately compensated (i.e., for buyouts) across race, gender, ability, and other factors.
- **Resource assessments** to determine the level of staff or volunteer time necessary to implement the plan.

With the results of the assessments, reengage stakeholders. If feasible options exist, select the consensus option. Depending on the findings of the assessments, community-driven relocation options or goals might shift.

CPD Considerations

- If CDBG funds are being considered, ensure that the proposed project/program meets a CDBG national objective.
- Consult with public and private agencies to help identify barriers to program implementation.
- Potential relocation benefits may apply: URA, Optional Relocation (owner-occupants under CDBG), or housing incentives (DR).
- Ensure that community consultation is consistent with the established Citizen Participation Plan and Consolidated Plan requirements.



Resilience in Practice

Newtok, AK | Relocation in Response to Severe Erosion

Newtok is a rural Alaska Native community of almost 400 people on the western coast of the state, situated on the Ninglick River. Newtok experiences severe erosion, attributed to a loss of permafrost and degradation of the shoreline from storms and flooding. In 2006, the community began evaluating options for the future of the community. Projections of Newtok's future shoreline erosion showed major land loss in the coming years with the community water source and school being compromised by 2022. At the start, community members and partners had considered multiple options, including efforts to remain in place. Through a series of risk assessments, the community reached consensus on relocation as the best long-term option, albeit a decision of last resort.

The overall relocation process is managed by the Newtok Village Council. The Newtok Planning Group – an assemblage of community representatives and over 30 organizations – provides resources, guidance, and other assistance to the relocation effort from various levels: state (e.g., Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Department of Environmental Conservation), federal (e.g., Denali Commission, HUD, Bureau of Indian Affairs), and non-profit (e.g., Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium). All meetings and assessments are shared on the [Newtok Planning Group website](#).

Additionally, the community has a dedicated on-site project manager to facilitate the relocation process, hired from outside the community. This manager brings engineering and project oversight expertise that doesn't exist in the community. This role has been vital to making progress and helping the community meet its goal of completing the relocation process by 2024.

Newtok has encountered many significant challenges in its relocation journey:

- Land acquisition: It took seven years to identify the new town site and acquire the rights in Mertarvik; much longer than expected.
- High costs: Construction costs in rural Alaska are extremely high. Constructing the new school is estimated at \$60 million and individual homes can cost as much as \$450,000.

- Operating two sites: Planners in Newtok note that running two town sites is extremely costly; such overlap should be limited.
- Short season: The construction season in this region lasts just a few months each year, which places increasing importance on logistics and planning.
- Nature of the hazard: The slow-moving nature of erosion means Newtok is ineligible for some types of disaster funding.
- Reluctance: A few community members remain reluctant to move.

Funding for the relocation to Mertarvik comes from many sources, including HUD's Indian CDBG Program and Imminent Threat Grants. Funding through the Denali Commission, in particular, does not require the same match funds or requirements as other federal funding sources and has given the community more flexibility to complete the relocation.

As of 2022, about one-third of the Newtok residents have moved to the new townsite at Mertarvik. The site has established buildings, roads, a power plant, landfill, water plant, community building, and airport.



The old Newtok village site (Department of Interior/Katie Orlinsky)

Step 4: Select Community-driven Relocation Solutions and Develop Detailed Plans



Community-driven relocation solutions take many years to design before implementation begins. In that time, critical planning efforts must occur. With community consent and buy-in, develop detailed plans. Such plans may cover social, environmental, legal, and financial elements of relocation.



Before detailed planning, talk with other communities that have implemented a similar effort.

Obtain funding. Adequate funding and equitable compensation are critical enabling factors to successful relocation. Identify funding opportunities, ensure that your community meets eligibility criteria, and establish appropriate systems and staffing to respond to funders' requirements. Consider whether you have in-house expertise and resources to manage the funding requirements, or if you need outside help. Common federal funding programs are listed in the Federal Community-driven Relocation Support section earlier in this guide. Other federal funding mechanisms are listed at the end of this guide. If using a patchwork of funding sources, determine if there are options to align requirements across funders.

Conduct detailed assessments and share information. As necessary, conduct additional assessments to meet the funding opportunity requirements. For example, Environmental Review must be completed prior to spending CDBG funding. Additional assessments might include creating or compiling hazard maps, climate projections, housing data, census data, and economic projections such as avoided losses.

Align contracts and procurement. For the new site, begin the legal process to obtain the land title, and any additional necessary easements or rights of way, water rights, or other means to secure community rights/ownership. Bid and procure the necessary design and construction contracts.

Prepare site plans. For undeveloped or underdeveloped relocation sites, create detailed land use and infrastructure plans (e.g., structures, roads, parks), including (re)zoning to protect abandoned land from future development. Develop architectural renderings/blueprints,

as appropriate. For example, in communities where new neighborhoods and homes will be constructed, community members should guide the neighborhood design and housing models process to ensure that the new location aligns with the shared community vision.

Establish eligibility criteria. Set up agreed-upon compensation schemes or determine priorities for relocating structures or community members based on hazard risk. Create equity criteria to ensure that rights are safeguarded, and allocations are fair.

Engage in ongoing outreach. Create an outreach plan so that community members are apprised of progress, aware of timeframes, and able to provide inputs to all elements of the relocation solution design. For example, buyout program outreach is critical to identify and communicate with homeowners to participate in the program. The companion implementation guide on [Resilience Education and Outreach Activities](#) offers additional stakeholder engagement considerations.

Explore buyout and relocation resources.

- [Disaster Recovery Buyout Program Design and Implementation Toolkit \(HUD\)](#)
- [Buyout Implementation Tool \(HUD\)](#)
- [Managed Coastal Retreat: A Legal Handbook on Shifting Development Vulnerable Areas \(Columbia University\)](#)
- [Buy-In for Buyouts: The Case for Managed Retreat from Flood Zones \(Lincoln Institute of Land Policy\)](#)



Step 5: Implement the Community-driven Relocation Solution



The implementation process and timeline for community-driven relocation will vary, based on the selected solution. Depending on the complexity of community goals (i.e., managed retreat vs. planned relocation) there may be multiple mechanisms that comprise the overall solution. It may be necessary to arrange for local staff or external consultants to monitor the process - including efforts to manage funding, prepare the site, and oversee construction, in addition to continuing consultation with community members and workgroups.

Community-driven relocation will often occur in phases, with community members in the highest risk areas relocating first. Phased approaches allow you to demonstrate success, build trust and support, assess strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities to modify future phases. The final phases of community-driven relocation may include decommissioning and conducting restoration activities at the old community site.

Continue your community engagement and outreach through this process and provide opportunities to weigh in on program modifications. Strong engagement will further increase transparency and build support. Keep checking in with community members, partners, and collaborators as priorities or timelines may shift. Remember, relocation efforts can take years to implement; consider how you will maintain momentum over that time and how you can maintain consistency if key staff or community members leave.

Learn about New Jersey's efforts implementing their Blue Acres buyout program on the next page.

CPD Considerations

- All key reporting elements of the CPD formula grant programs are integrated into the [HUD Integrated Disbursement and Information System \(IDIS\)](#).
- Grantees typically create new IDIS Projects through the AP-35 Projects screens during the setup of their Annual Action Plan. This is also the best way to ensure that any projects funded through CPD sources will be properly tied to the Action Plan.
- CPD funded elements of a community-driven relocation solution would be set up during the creation of the Annual Action Plan, along with other proposed projects. The matrix code used depends on the specific project and associated plan goal.
- For CDBG-DR grantees, a separate action plan is required.

Restoration of Previously Occupied Lands

The restoration of formerly occupied lands using nature-based solutions can bring multiple benefits, including boosting resilience for remaining parts of the community, offering recreational and cultural connections, and enhancing economic development opportunities.

Explore resources on nature-based solutions.

[Climate Resilience Implementation Guide - Nature-based Solutions \(HUD\)](#)

[Nature-Based Solutions Resource Guide \(White House Council on Environmental Quality\)](#)



Resilience in Practice

Blue Acres, NJ | Buyouts in Response to Inland Flooding and Coastal Storms

Properties along New Jersey's coast and rivers are vulnerable to damage from coastal storms such as hurricanes and Nor'easters, and heavy precipitation events that result in inland flooding. Recent major storms include Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and Hurricane Ida in 2021, although smaller storms and flooding events are common; many residents experience repeated impacts.

[The Blue Acres Program](#) run by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) buys and demolishes properties with repeated flooding damage. Blue Acres has operated since 1995 and is closely linked to the DEP's Green Acres program which acquires open space in flood-prone areas to prevent development and create recreation opportunities. Green Acres started in 1961. The longevity of the programs means there is deep knowledge and experience among staff, and proven processes to implement programs. Additionally, the program has name recognition, which builds a level of trust, so property owners have confidence in the process. Key partners include local governments, non-profit partners, and community-based organizations.

Funding for Blue Acres comes from several sources. Program administrators are very adept at using FEMA HMGP funding after weathering many disasters. More recently, Blue Acres used CDBG-DR funding. Importantly, the State of New Jersey allocates ongoing funding, so Blue Acres can acquire properties in areas without a federal disaster declaration.

While Blue Acres is a voluntary program, it tries to buy properties in groups; although, the program does not require clusters or community consensus. In many ways this makes the buyout program easier to implement than a full-scale community relocation program, but it is not without challenges.

Key challenges cut across several areas. Following Hurricane Sandy, the program received nearly \$300 million in federal funding. Since some of this funding came from a new source (CDBG-DR) program administrators had to learn new requirements for income qualification, primary residency, tenant relocation assistance, and services for those with limited English proficiency. Additionally, the program used the HUD funding as a match to the FEMA funding, which was a limiting factor because buyouts had to meet both HUD and FEMA expectations. As

with most voluntary buyout programs, eligible participation has not reached 100% - so a checkerboard of vulnerable structures remain. Non-profit partners can serve as liaisons to connect homeowners and tenants to a broader array of resources and support, but funding to these groups may not last.

The Blue Acres program has used the majority of the funds received for Hurricane Sandy to purchase over 800 properties. Areas for improvement include building broader engagement and outreach practices to better connect community and culture with planning and decision-making. Better use of language translations and interpreters, and social media will also strengthen public awareness. Program metrics can expand. For example, the program hasn't actively assessed whether property owners are relocating out of harm's way, buyouts are effective in mitigating future storm damage, or the value of ecosystem services for land post acquisition. Recently, the Blue Acres program was moved within the DEP Office of Climate Resilience, creating opportunities to align with broader resilience planning, strategies, and priorities.



Floodwaters in a New Jersey Community



Step 6: Measure and Share Progress



Tracking and reporting progress is an important part of demonstrating the success of community-driven relocation. Monitoring and measuring progress occurs throughout the relocation process, not just at the end. Identify a team or point person for tracking metrics and determine how you will report outcomes to funders and the public.

Identify Metrics. Early on, identify quantitative metrics required by funding or regulatory agencies. See the Measuring Success box below for sample metrics. The group [Resilience Metrics](#) offers additional information on how to select and monitor a variety of climate change quantitative indicators and metrics. In some cases, it might be appropriate to monitor qualitative measures including those relating to social and human rights.

Establish Baselines. Baseline metrics may come from data before (and after) the solution is implemented (e.g., population counts, wage or income data, property values). Assessments conducted in the screening phase (Step 3) and design phase (Step 4) may inform baseline measures.

Capture Data. Measure and record the data. Determine who will collect it, how they will convey it, and to whom. For example, if data is collected on paper forms at public sessions, is there a plan to assess the forms and share the results? When possible, collect the same data consistently over time to track progress.

Analyze the Data. Determine when and how often you will analyze the data. Metrics around community acceptance, support for the relocation process, and other measures are valuable to analyze over time. A program evaluation, planned in earlier implementation stages, can also facilitate learning and improvement.

Reassess the Solution. Use data to assess strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities to improve. This may involve returning to Step 4 and redesigning specific aspects of your relocation effort.

Share the Results. Reporting results can solidify public, political, and financial support. Determine how you will share results. Think about your audience, delivery method, format, content/language, timing, and messengers.

MEASURING PROGRESS

It is important to assess the performance of the community-driven relocation activity. If equity is a community goal, consider tracking metrics by income, neighborhood, or race/ethnicity where appropriate and possible. This will allow you to identify the outcomes of your solution on different communities and subgroups.

Sample Outreach Metrics

- Number of public meetings, including with LMI community groups
- Number of resources available to the public, including those targeting segments of the community (e.g., non-English speakers, LMI community members)
- Percentage of participants perceiving process as fair or transparent

Sample Resilience Metrics

- Acres of land abandoned and/or obtained for the new site location
- Number of people or households taking advantage of solution, including LMI community members
- Number of people displaced/injured by natural hazard events after implementation, as compared to past events

Sample Economic Metrics

- Dollar value of resources secured
- Cost of relocation, including the land acquired via buyout, demolition, new or rehabbed housing, assessments, and other costs
- Number of employment opportunities filled by local LMI community members



Additional Resources

- [Climate change – A Climate Migration Pilot Program Could Enhance the Nation’s Resilience and Reduce Federal Fiscal Exposure \(Government Accountability Office\)](#)
- [Climate Change and Coastal Zones \(U.S. Agency for International Development\)](#)
- [Climigration](#)
- [Economic Decision Guide Software \(National Institute of Standards and Technology\)](#)
- [Managed Retreat Resources \(Columbia University\)](#)
- [The Next American Migration: What Cities Should Know About Climate Change and Populations on the Move \(National League of Cities\)](#)
- [Tribal Climate and Resilience and Adaptation \(HUD\)](#)
- [The Unmet Infrastructure Needs of Tribal Communities and Alaska Native Villages in Process of Relocating to Higher Ground as a Result of Climate Change \(U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs\)](#)
- [Village Infrastructure Protection \(Denali Commission\)](#)

Additional Federal Funding Information

- [Civil Works Program \(Army Corps of Engineers\)](#)
- [Coastal Zone management Program \(National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration\)](#)
- [Denali Commission](#)
- [Grantee Information \(HUD\)](#)
- [Grants.gov](#)
- [Tribal Climate Resilience Program \(Department of the Interior\)](#)

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A Note on Selected Terminology

Community-driven relocation is sometimes addressed alongside the concepts of “managed retreat” and “climate migration.” This guide uses these terms where source materials rely on them, or to make a distinction between community-driven relocation and other resilience actions.

Managed retreat differs from community-driven relocation in that it lacks a predetermined relocation site. The term is sometimes viewed unfavorably. Managed retreat can be perceived as reactive and exclusionary of community voices.⁹

Climate migration differs from community-driven relocation in several important ways: (1) it is almost always reactive to a natural hazard, (2) there is no predetermined relocation site, (3) there is no formal planning process or procedure for relocation, (4) it lacks legal or other protections, (5) those seeking to relocate may be referred to as “refugees” or “migrants,” and (6) resettlement may not be permanent.¹⁰



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