

# Evaluation of Policies for Climate Resilience for the Town of Hector

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## Overview

This document serves as a supplement to the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Evaluation Tool, which is a survey of existing plans, policies and projects intended to ensure that all community plans and policies will either help reduce or, at a minimum, not increase vulnerability. The objective of this action is to identify deficiencies in the Town of Hector's plans and local laws, identify areas where the Town has planned for resiliency, and identify areas of improvement that can be completed through future planning processes.

This document was completed as part of the Climate Smart Communities certification process, and follows the sections of the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool. This document also serves as a foundation for a Climate Adaptation Plan. There is a list of potential actions for the Town to explore at the end of the document that were identified through the evaluation process alongside their corresponding CSC Actions.

## Improvement Areas

### Section 1: Community Plan Checklist

The community plan checklist provides an overview of plans, laws, ordinances and strategies that a municipality has adopted. The Town of Hector has a Comprehensive Plan, a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, and an Emergency Response Plan. The Town is also recognized as a participating municipality in the Schuyler County Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Schuyler County Floodplain Management Plan, and the Schuyler County Watershed Protection Plan. Due to the Town's proximity to Seneca Lake, the Seneca-Keuka Watershed Nine Element Plan is also applicable to the Town. Relevant documents for residents can be found on the Town's website, including "Managing Runoff on Steep Slopes" and "A Homeowner's Guide to Lake-Friendly Living".

Through the evaluation process, multiple areas for improvement were identified. The plans that the Town has adopted so far have sufficiently established a baseline for municipal operations and response to potential hazards. However, the Sustainability Committee has identified some possible plans to create that would benefit the Town. As part of the Climate Smart Communities certification process, the Town of Hector and members of CCE Tompkins County and CCE Schuyler County completed a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI). This inventory provides data that can be used as the foundation for an Open Space Plan. The Town can use the NRI to develop an Open Space Plan, which identifies open spaces within the Town and prioritizes open spaces to protect for future generations. Within the Open Space Plan, the Town can identify management strategies for resource-rich areas of the Town identified through the NRI.

Another area for improvement would be the adoption of an Emergency Response and Short-Term Recovery Plan. The Town currently has an Emergency Management Plan, which establishes the authority, procedure, and guidance for coordinated action in giving assistance to citizens in the Town of Hector in the event of a disaster. This document outlines the responsibilities, job actions, and contact information for responsible parties. Through coordination with Schuyler County Emergency Management, the Town could establish a plan outlining short-term recovery measures to be taken in the event of a disaster which would benefit the public and increase confidence in the event of a disaster.

Lastly, the Sustainability Committee recommends the development of a Town Drainage Plan to reduce future vulnerability and increase climate resilience. This plan would map out the road ditch drainage system and identify issues in culvert sizing, streams, and birds eye drainage. Flooding is a noted hazard that the Town seeks to mitigate. Identifying where flash flooding has previously occurred and mapping out the systems that potentially exacerbate these issues will help the Town better approach flooding problems in the future.

## Section 2: Vulnerability and Risk Assessments

The Town of Hector participated in the Schuyler County Hazard Mitigation Plan process through providing information, participating in Council of Governments Hazard Mitigation meetings, and through an in-person interview with the Hector Highway Superintendent to identify hazards of concern, repetitive loss areas, mitigation priorities, and mitigation projects. This plan, which when adopted will cover 2021 through 2026, provides detailed overviews of the existing vulnerabilities and risks within the county at the municipal level. An extensive appendix within the plan provides a bulk of necessary information to identify vulnerabilities and risks within the Town.

Even with the Town's participation in the Schuyler County Hazard Mitigation Plan, there are still opportunities for improvement at the municipal level. Mapping flash flood areas, particularly from the August 2018 flood that caused extensive damage, would provide a baseline for risk assessment and mitigation. This mapping would complement the Town Drainage Plan, discussed on page 2. A larger issue facing the Town and beyond are the heavily outdated floodplain maps. FEMA administers these floodplain maps, and many have not been updated since the 1980s. While waiting for new floodplain maps to be released, the Town can identify

vulnerabilities and assess risks through the identification of flooding zones and using that information to improve their plans.

### Section 3: Public Outreach and Engagement

The Sustainability Committee has spearheaded public outreach and engagement within the Town of Hector. In pursuit of Climate Smart Communities certification, the Sustainability Committee has conducted educational events and community campaigns. In 2021, a successful HeatSmart Community Campaign was conducted where 25 families, 10 of which were low-income, signed up for HeatSmart grants, and the public was educated on the benefits of heat pump technologies. In 2022, a Community Solar Campaign was conducted to educate residents on the effectiveness of solar energy and the benefits of participating in a community solar project. On Earth Day 2022, the Sustainability Committee held an Earth Day Event at the Town of Hector Firehall with four speakers to educate residents on different means to combat climate change at a local level. Prior to Election Day 2022, the Sustainability Committee recruited Dr. Anna Kelles to do a remote presentation on the Environmental Bond Act. Public outreach and engagement have been a strong suit of the Sustainability Committee and the Town of Hector, and future outreach opportunities can be identified to increase this effect.

There are opportunities to increase public outreach and engagement within the Town. Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board, which serves Schuyler, Steuben and Chemung Counties, has a variety of relevant publications that could be published on the Town of Hector website. Technical assistance documents for streams, stormwater, flood warning systems, floodproofing mitigation, and map viewers are all available for the public to read. Placing these links on the Town of Hector's website would introduce them to the residents and provide important information in an accessible manner. Another opportunity for improvement is the creation of a local evacuation plan. Currently, the Town does not have a local evacuation plan. One such plan should include evacuation routes, evacuation bus pick-up locations (if applicable), and location of severe weather shelters and pet shelters. This plan could be developed with Schuyler County Emergency Management providing assistance as necessary. Lastly, the Town could provide FEMA materials, particularly the "*Are You Ready?*" Guide, an in-depth guide to citizen preparedness. Taking steps like these will ensure that members of the

community feel safe and prepared, and will ensure confidence in the local government to act when necessary.

#### Section 4: Integration of Municipal Plans

Through this process, the Sustainability Committee has identified a need for improved integration of municipal plans. The Town has a Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in 2015, and a potential update to this plan is currently being explored. Many gaps currently exist in the Comprehensive Plan as identified through the CSRP Tool. The Comprehensive Plan should reference the other plans that the Town has adopted, as well as the Schuyler County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plans identified in Section 1 operate independently of one another. These plans should support the greater goals of the Town, and be integrated into each other to increase climate resilience going forward. As discussed in Section 1, one example of this is the use of the NRI to create an Open Space Plan. If written, this plan could be incorporated as a chapter in the Comprehensive Plan and guide sustainability and preservation initiatives within the Town. The findings of a Town Drainage Plan could also be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, identifying flood-prone areas and developing management strategies in coordination with other objectives. The integration of municipal plans is critical to the success of said plans, as they should all support one another and support the overall goals of the Town.

While the integration of municipal plans can be improved, the Town has been an active participant in county-wide plans, as well as inter-municipal plans in support of larger goals. Participation in the Schuyler County Hazard Mitigation Plan represents an understanding of the climate related threats and hazards facing the Town, and a need to address the hazards effectively. The Seneca-Keuka Watershed Nine Element Plan mentions the Town of Hector and waterbodies that are within the municipal boundaries, and notes economic and population trends in Hector that may affect the watershed. Town participation in these plans demonstrates a recognition of challenges on a larger scale. However, developing applicable plans at the local level and integrating those plans would provide a strong platform for future resilience within the Town.

#### Section 5: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

The Town of Hector has a general emergency warning system, but most disaster preparedness and recovery measures exist at the county level. There are some links between county and town disaster preparedness, such as the Environmental Emergency Services Gauge. EES is a not-for-profit corporation that supports flood detection and warnings, drought monitoring, Chemical Hazard Information Technical Support, and Public Information and Education. Beyond the Emergency Management Plan, the Town does not have many local plans in place to address disaster preparedness.

The adoption of an Emergency Response/Short Term Recovery Plan is critical for the Town to address disaster preparedness at the local level. This plan would cover evacuation routes, the establishment of shelters, damage assessments, and a list of organizations and stakeholders critical for support in the recovery process. Adopting this plan could lead to the development of more plans, including an Evacuation Plan and a Continuity of Operation Plan.

#### Section 6: Hazard Mitigation Implementation

The Town of Hector has taken the Climate Smart Communities pledge and is actively working towards Bronze Certification. However, through the CSRP Tool, many gaps in Hazard Mitigation Implementation have been recognized. There are opportunities for trainings on a variety of topics, including retrofitting flood-prone residential buildings and post-flood stream intervention. Collaboration with agencies such as STC or Schuyler County Soil and Water District would be beneficial to the Town as they aim to implement more hazard mitigation practices.

The Town of Hector, without a zoning ordinance, cannot best utilize land-use tools to manage development in flood-prone areas. Cluster developments, zoning for open and recreational spaces, and zoning for the protection of riparian buffers are all tools for hazard mitigation. These tools are built out of zoning, and if the Town were to adopt a zoning ordinance in the future, these tools could be effective in the implementation of hazard mitigation measures.

The Sustainability Committee plans to write a Climate Action Plan in the future. A Climate Action Plan identifies strategies to reduce emissions, using the Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Inventory as a baseline. The Sustainability Committee also plans to write a Climate Adaptation Plan, which addresses current and future scenarios in a larger participatory planning process which would take into account the potential change in hazard frequency or

magnitude in the future, and use existing data from projects including the Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Inventory to establish potential measures for hazard mitigation.

Lastly, the Town of Hector has not participated in various FEMA grant programs, such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program, and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program. While these grants may not always be applicable, there are avenues for work to be done via these programs or similar programs, such as riparian buffer stabilization, or trainings in post-flood stream intervention training.

**Table of Potential Actions and Corresponding CSC Actions for Climate Resilience  
for the Town of Hector**

Potential Actions	Relevant CSC Actions
Section 1: Community Plan Checklist	
Adopt an Open Space Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.18: Zoning for Protection of Natural Areas</li> <li>• 6.1: Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements</li> <li>• 7.8: Conserve Natural Areas</li> </ul>
Adopt an Emergency Response and Short-Term Recovery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.4: Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>
Adopt a Town Drainage Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.9: Watershed-based Flood Mitigation Plan</li> <li>• 7.12: Culverts and Dams</li> <li>• 7.13: Riparian Buffers</li> </ul>

<b>Section 2: Vulnerability and Risk Assessments</b>	
Map areas of historical flooding and areas of previous inundation	
<b>Section 3: Public Outreach and Engagement</b>	
Increase document sharing with public, officials, and planners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.4: Partnerships with Other Entities</li> </ul>
Make emergency preparedness materials available to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9.1: Climate Change Education and Engagement</li> <li>• 9.4: Local Climate Action Website</li> <li>• 9.5: Social Media</li> </ul>
<b>Section 4: Integration of Municipal Plans</b>	
Emphasize hazards and green infrastructure in the Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.1: Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements</li> <li>• 6.2: Smart Growth Policies</li> <li>• 7.11: Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>
Update Floodplain Management Ordinance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.8: Conserve Natural Areas</li> <li>• 7.20: Water-smart Landscaping</li> </ul>
Establish a zoning ordinance	
<b>Section 5: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery</b>	
Adopt a special needs registry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.4: Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>
Adopt an Emergency Response and Short-Term Recovery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.4: Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>
Adopt an Evacuation Plan/Flood Preparedness Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.4: Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> <li>• 7.5: Heat Emergency Plan</li> <li>• 7.7: Cooling Centers</li> <li>• 7.9: Watershed-based Flood Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>
Maintain General Emergency Warning System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.4: Climate-resilient Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Section 6: Hazard Mitigation Implementation</b>	
Establish a Climate Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.3: Government Operations Climate Action Plan</li> </ul>
Offer post-flood intervention training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.14: Riparian Buffers</li> </ul>