

Flood Risk Assessment and Reduction



Fremont, Nebraska

Project Team: Headwaters Economics, City of Fremont, Fremont Area United Way

Funding Amount: \$115,000



Project Summary

The project aimed to develop a **community-informed flood risk assessment for vulnerable neighborhoods in southwestern Fremont, with actionable recommendations** for risk reduction. This area faces high flood risk from more intense precipitation combined with local stressors like insufficient stormwater infrastructure. The team provided disaster risk reduction information in English and Spanish to local schools and **ensured emergency alerts are translated into Spanish**, improving safety for neighborhoods such as the Regency Mobile Home Park, which is predominantly Spanish-speaking.

The team also facilitated **long-term recovery group meetings to identify solutions** such as evacuation shelters and projects to reduce flood risks. These meetings **built relationships and coordinated resources** among local government, housing groups, schools, public health, faith-based groups, and nonprofits. A major focus was **addressing the needs of lower-income and highly vulnerable residents**. As part of this effort, the team conducted needs assessments at Regency and Meadowbrook mobile home parks to support resource coordination, and continues to work on longer-term solutions.

With city and county partners, the team advanced work to **identify new emergency shelters that are more accessible and culturally appropriate**. Three potential sites were identified to better serve the Hispanic community, with efforts underway to gain Red Cross approval before year's end. Current Red Cross shelters are distant from these neighborhoods and difficult to access.

Some efforts were complicated by **political rhetoric around temporary and undocumented workers**. For instance, United Way postponed a planned workshop due to fears of deportation in the mobile home parks. The team adapted by gathering input through trusted community leaders and small groups, rather than large events.

Finally, the team delivered a **community-wide flood risk assessment tool now used by the City to meet federal standards and prioritize risk reduction**. The tool informs permitting decisions and helps communicate with developers about elevating new homes and affordable housing above flood depths.

Project Goals



Create a flood risk assessment for vulnerable neighborhoods



Create actionable recommendations for reducing flood risks in these neighborhoods



Create a mapping tool to evaluate building permits and support developers with elevating homes and structures above flood depths

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As our community's Spanish-speaking population continues to grow, translating the Emergency Alert System into Spanish ensures equal access to critical safety information. This enhances public safety by building trust between the community and local agencies, reducing miscommunication during severe weather, public health emergencies, or evacuations, encouraging great participation in safety programs, and protecting more families through timely, understandable alerts.

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Shayla Linn,

Executive Director, Fremont United Way

Community Challenges



Increased Flood Risk

Exacerbated by climate-change driven changes in precipitation and extreme weather events



Vulnerable Housing Stock

Mobile and manufactured homes are highly vulnerable to flood damage and capacity for repair/replacement is low



Stormwater Infrastructure

Insufficient stormwater infrastructure contributes to increased flooding risk

Project Timeline

Months 1-6

Assess vulnerability and risk

Months 6-9

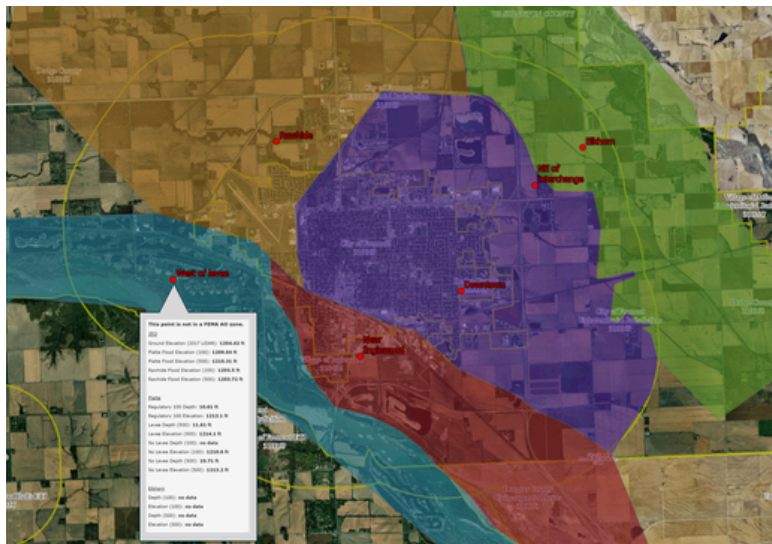
Investigate options

Months 9-12

Prioritize and plan

Project Approach

- ★ Provided culturally and linguistically relevant opportunities for Spanish and English-speaking residents, with on-site community outreach with mobile home residents.
- ★ Integrated this flood risk assessment with related City efforts to reduce flooding risk, including Fremont's Hazard Mitigation Plan update and extant ARPA-funded multi-benefit projects that include flood protection.
- ★ Partnered with a local nonprofit, United Way, that has deep community relationships to engage with and build trust in the community for this work.



The project team worked to develop a tool the City is using to evaluate building permits and communicate with developers about elevating homes and structures above flood depths. Each area indicated on the map required unique modeling to accurately represent the complex, multi-river floodplain.

Impact

This project engaged highly vulnerable residents of southwestern Fremont, including low-income residents and those facing language barriers, in the risk assessment and prioritization process. It created a technically robust and community-informed flood risk assessment, and grew capacity for identifying and pursuing funding opportunities for feasible and community-supported adaptation actions.

Next Steps

- Obtain funding for implementation of priority recommendations identified in the flood risk assessment.
- Continue transparent communication with residents about progress being made on the priorities they helped identify.
- Increase community understanding and awareness of flooding and other climate impacts
- Establish a citywide commitment to mitigation and long-term resilience goals.

More Information