



Creating Strategies for Flood Preparedness Ellicott City Safe and Sound Plan (Howard County, Maryland)

This program is one of 12 featured in our Creating Strategies for Flood Preparedness profile series. The flood assistance/preparedness programs highlighted in this series represent state and local efforts across the country to make homes and communities flood resilient and to aid in recovery efforts after flooding events. When possible, each program's background information, funding, impact, eligibility, services, and challenges/lessons learned are summarized in the series. These examples can be used as models for other states and local agencies as they consider local possibilities to develop, fund, and implement their own programs.



Program Background. As a response to the devastating thousand-year floods in Maryland's historic Ellicott City between 2016 and 2018, Howard County government created the **Ellicott City Safe and Sound Plan**. The plan consisted of a series of projects with the purpose of reducing the impact of floods using resilient infrastructure, management of stream debris and the increase of green spaces in Ellicott City. Howard County also provided matching grants to residents and business owners for floodproofing of structures. The projects helped to prepare Ellicott City for climate change, guided resiliency recovery, and aided in the reconstruction of flooded areas.



Funding. Ellicott City received \$20 million in county funding and a \$75 million **Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Program loan** from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Howard County funding provided infrastructure improvements and was also available to match 50% of floodproofing costs up to \$5,000 for property owners and \$2,500 for business owners.



Impact. During the first two years of the program, Howard County acquired property to construct the H4 dry flood mitigation pond, advanced the design of the 5,000-foot **Extended North Tunnel** to divert 26,000 gallons per second away from historic Ellicott City, and purchased properties in the West End area for additional projects. In total, the programs will create 890 jobs and serve 328,000 consumers.



Program Eligibility. A number of the Ellicott City Safe and Sound Plan's projects were pre-identified during plan development and did not include eligibility requirements. Property owners in the Plumtree, Little Plumtree, Bonnie Branch, Tiber-Hudson, and New Cut watersheds were eligible for the Ellicott City Safe and Sound Plan's grant program for improvements to their primary buildings or structural stream crossing only. The watersheds include the following Ellicott City communities: Valley Mede, Chatham, Dunloggin, Historic Ellicott City, and neighborhoods off Frederick Road, Old Columbia Pike, Bonnie Branch Road, and New Cut Road. For structures to be eligible, they must be a primary residence or commercial structure in flood zones A, AE, or Shaded X from the FEMA flood insurance rate maps viewable at the [Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map for Howard County](#).

Eligible improvements or projects that could be conducted on structures in these communities included flood doors, sealant, relocation of HVACs, shield, and drainage systems. More examples of eligible projects are described in this [report by the Army Corps of Engineers](#). Business owners were required to be in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.



Program Services. The Safe and Sound plan had 11 focal areas across two phases. The first phase included acquisition of buildings and properties for flood mitigation and safety, collaboration with state partners to expand flood management initiatives, and the development of a community group to provide feedback on city plans. The second phase included the use of maps and signage to identify high ground access points, flood mitigation projects, and more property acquisitions. A full list of the focal areas is [available here](#). The plan also offered an interactive map that provided the location and description of current and planned projects. The plan's website answered frequently asked questions and provided access to reports and resources related to the flood mitigation plan.

For more information, visit [Ellicott City Safe and Sound](#), [Ellicott City "Safe and Sound" Plan: Flood Mitigation Options](#), and EPA's related [Howard County Factsheet](#).

For additional examples and resources related to flood preparedness, visit...

<http://bit.ly/NCHHpubsCSFP>



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