



Community Partners Aid Citizens Using the Buyout Program

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

Cape Girardeau, MO—For a city on the western shore of the Mississippi River, city officials and citizens are determined not to let that the river swallow up their homes as it did during the great Midwest floods of the 1990s.



In the late 1950s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built an impressive concrete floodwall to prevent the river from flooding homes and businesses along the river, which was successful in holding back the swollen river for several years. In 1993 as floodwaters rose, some sections of the city were exposed to the river and resulted in 151 homes being damaged. The city spent \$442,000 on sandbagging, extra crews, renting emergency generators, and flood debris removal and cleanup. The 1995 flood cost another \$300,000.

Out of these crises, a partnership emerged among the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Missouri Department of Economic Development (MDED), the Salvation Army Midland, the Interfaith Ministries, and the City of Cape Girardeau. Together, these organizations combined resources and addressed each family’s needs, making it possible for them to participate in a flood buyout program.

Buyouts are based on the premise that using tax funds for buyouts saves taxpayers money in the end from not having to pay for repeated disaster recoveries. Once purchased, damaged structures are demolished and the land converted to deed-restricted permanent open space.

For the City of Cape Girardeau, the buyout program was highly successful. FEMA contributed more than \$1.14 million to a \$2.6 million program to purchase 109 properties. Residential structures in the 100-year floodplain now number only 17.

During the March 2008 flooding, the city experienced only some closed streets, basement seepage, and limited flood damage.

“The buyout effort demonstrated how communities could take care of their residents in a crisis,” said Housing Assistance Coordinator Stephen S. Williams, who worked on the buyout program for the city at the time.

“The key to the program was identifying the needs of the people in the community,” added Ken Eftink, director of Development Services for the City of Cape Girardeau’s Division of Planning Services.

Since then, the city has taken other extensive flood control measures besides buyouts, adopting an all-hazards mitigation plan, and actively regulating building in the floodplain according to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) standards.

But the real savings of these efforts is in alleviating potential human suffering or loss of life. Instead of rising rivers, there is a rise in the quality of life. Just ask buyout participant David Allen who was relocated uphill to a nearby home from which he can view his former property through the living room window of his current home.

“The city was wonderful,” Allen said. “I wouldn’t have had any place to go if it wasn’t for that [program].”

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VII**

State: **Missouri**

County: **Cape Girardeau County**

Activity/Project Location

City/Community: **Cape Girardeau**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**
Activity/Project Start Date: **11/1995**
Activity/Project End Date: **12/1998**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Other Federal Agencies (OFA)**
Application/Project Number: **unknown**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$2,411,398.00 (Actual)**
Non FEMA Cost:

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**
Federal Disaster #: **1054 , 06/02/1995**
Federal Disaster Year: **1995**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1748 , 03/12/2008; 1749 , 03/19/2008**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

No URLs were submitted

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.