



Atmore Plaza on Dry Ground

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Escambia County, Alabama

Atmore, AL - Atmore Plaza was known for its chronic flooding, along with the other structures located in the 142-acre Owen Street drainage area. The existing 1940's drainage system could not handle the volume of surface water that accumulated during heavy rains. To the pleasant surprise of many residents, Atmore Plaza did not flood during Hurricane Ivan. The success was due to a recently expanded drainage system.



The old drainage system under Owen Street, starting at Carney Street and extending over 2000 feet to Jackson Street, could not handle the surface water volumes from heavy rain events, which occurred during Hurricane Georges in 1998. The drainage system was a concrete covered dirt ditch, prone to collapse and sink holes.

The City of Atmore estimates their costs associated with frequent repairs to the existing culvert, erecting barricades and assisting stranded motorists at \$15,000 per year. After Hurricane Georges in 1998, the losses associated with the under capacity drainage system exceeded \$1.4 million — \$180,000 in damages to Atmore Plaza and \$1.2 million in lost revenue. Additionally, the tenants at the Atmore Plaza were not renewing their leases, turning the Plaza into an increasingly vacant eye sore.

Through the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, the City of Atmore received over a million dollars in federal and state assistance to modernize and expand the drainage system. It was updated to a reinforced concrete culvert ranging in size from 84 inches to 96 inches in diameter. As a result of the project, the eleven houses, ten commercial properties, and one public facility previously at risk to 50-year flooding events now have a greatly reduced risk of flooding.

Mayor Howard Shell said, "This project provided a much needed system to remove flood waters from a shopping district which had suffered severe flooding and a loss of revenue to both the business owners and the tax base of the city. These improvements to the drainage system have enabled the shopping center to attract new tenants and rebuild the tax base in this area."

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Escambia County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Flood Control**
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/1998**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **State sources**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **City of Atmore**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$1,000,000.00 (Estimated)**
Non FEMA Cost:

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **No**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2004**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/index.jsp>
Reference URL 2: <http://ema.alabama.gov/>

Main Points

- Atmore Plaza had been inundated by frequent flooding causing damages and business loss.
- Costs associated with frequent repairs to the existing stormwater management system, erecting barricades and assisting motorists were exceeding \$15,000 per year.
- Losses due to Hurricane Georges in 1998 exceeded \$1.4 million.
- The City received funding to mitigate the system by modernizing and expanding culverts and drainage basins.
- The Atmore Plaza did not flood during or after Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The project was successful in preventing damages and has enabled the shopping center to attract new tenants and increase the tax base in the area.



Atmore Plaza previously was plagued with flooding.