

## **North Beach Flood Action Education & Engagement Plan** *(October 12 version)*

### **Introduction**

As the Town of North Beach plans for the future, it is important to understand and address the flood risks associated with the Town's adjacency to the Chesapeake Bay and the effects of climate change.

Accordingly, the Town has been working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the University of Maryland's Environmental Finance Center (EFC) for more than a year to fund and develop a comprehensive flood action plan. Phase 1 of the project involved constructing a framework that established the following objectives:

- Identify and characterize both coastal and stormwater flooding problems,
- Assess the vulnerability of important assets to these hazards,
- Identify solutions to mitigate the problems,
- Outline ways to pay for these solutions, and
- Provide a roadmap of implementation to ensure collaboration among stakeholders.

With the framework completed and approved by the Town Council in April 2021, the Town will contract with an organization experienced in flood and climate mitigation planning to develop a flood action plan with detailed short- and long-term recommendations to address flooding the community faces now and will confront in the future. Funding for this second phase of the project comes via a \$75,000 grant from the DNR.

Concurrent with development of the flood action plan, it is essential for the Town to educate and engage residents, business, and key stakeholders so that they are invested and supportive of necessary flood mitigation measures that affect public and private land in the community.

This document lays out a plan for accomplishing this goal. It includes identifying points through the flood action plan development process where stakeholder input should be obtained, e.g., identifying flood impacts, ranking assets impacted by flooding, prioritizing projects/programs/strategies to reduce flood risks, and prioritizing budget and financing scenarios.

Following are the key messages/story lines that should be reflected in all internal and external communications about the project and the Town's efforts. A preliminary list of proof points is also outlined that support the key messages as well as a slate of necessary action items and metrics to drive the Town towards accomplishing this goal.

## Key Messages

1. North Beach is undergoing a renaissance as a waterfront resort. With the renaissance, however, comes headwinds, i.e., climate change, flooding, and the impact of both on infrastructure, residences, and businesses.
2. As the Town plans for the future, we believe it is critical to understand and address the flood risks associated with the effects of climate change and the Town's adjacency to the Chesapeake Bay.
3. The Town has long been committed to aggressively addressing flood risks. We are currently working to implement several short- and long-term projects to mitigate flooding and protect infrastructure, residences, and businesses. The Town's leadership is leveraging the resources of the state (i.e., funding, expertise, assistance) and the volunteer energy of its residents to complete these projects.

## Proof Points

- Like many communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, North Beach has experienced heavier and more frequent flooding in recent years from storms and tidal surges. The repeated flooding has damaged homes, businesses, and infrastructure, as well as increased the amount of polluted runoff to the Bay and adjacent wetlands.
- The Town has committed significant funding—in the past and present—to address this flooding.
  - o In 2015, a living shoreline was constructed along the water's edge at the town's Walton Beach Nature Preserve. It created over an acre of new tidal wetlands and vastly improved the capacity of the tidal marsh to capture/dissipate flood water between the living shoreline and Bay Avenue.
  - o In 2017, the flood protection earthen dike/berm was constructed adjacent to the living shoreline, just north of 9th Street between Bay and Atlantic Avenues.
  - o In the current Mayor's first term, \$295,000 was approved for stormwater/flood-related improvements (e.g., additional stormwater pumps, pump station upgrades, outfall clean out.)
  - o In recognition of the increased frequency of storm and coastal flooding, the Town established a Stormwater & Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee (SFMAC) in 2019. This committee is comprised of Town staff and residents who work together to address flooding issues and to help sustain mitigation efforts over time. (Agendas and minutes for Committee meetings: <https://www.northbeachmd.org/node/31874/minutes>).

- The Town's Department of Community Conservation has consistently provided "green" sustainability programs for residents (<https://www.northbeachmd.org/community-conservation>). The projects promote restoration of native wildlife and living shorelines, maintains the safety of town parks and natural areas, and creates eco-tourism opportunities.
- In 2020, the large drainpipe along 5<sup>th</sup> Street was cleaned from the beach outfall to the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Chesapeake Avenue, removing approximately 24 inches of silt and debris—some 185 tons.
- In 2021, work was completed by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration to raise Maryland Route 261 in the northern part of town that connects to Anne Arundel County. This purpose of this project was to raise the road surface above tidal flooding and provide a high point in the roadway to connect the flood dike.
- In 2021, the Town received \$20,000 from Maryland State Highway Administration as a fee in lieu for the Route 261 road elevation project described above. These funds will be directed to the upgrade of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Pump Station.
- In Fall 2021, contracts will be awarded to upgrade the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Stormwater Pump Station with two larger pumps, additional piping, and a control panel. The project is budgeted at \$100,000, with completion expected in Fall 2021.
- The Town is at present pursuing a \$95,000 grant from the state (via auspices of State Senator Jackson) to assist in flood mitigation.
- An upgrade to the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Pump Station is being planned. Preliminary design includes a new, larger pump, new outfall piping, and a new pump structure/housing.
- The Town and its SFMAC has been working with the University of Maryland's Environmental Finance Committee on a comprehensive food action plan.
  - Phase 1—a framework outlining the elements of the plan—was completed (with a \$35,000 grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources) and approved by the Town Council in April 2021.
  - Phase 2 will proceed with a \$75,000 grant from the Maryland DNR to address the town's flooding problems and recommend specific action items. Once the plan is complete, the Town will actively seek funding (federal, state, local, blended) to move forward on implementing the recommendations.

## Action Plan

The list of stakeholders to address when it comes to “understanding and addressing the flood risks associated with the Town’s adjacency to the Chesapeake Bay and the effects of climate change” is extensive. At a minimum, it would include residents, business owners, visitors, state and local elected officials, and the sustainability community.

The challenge for North Beach will be to overcome stakeholders’ barriers—if any—to the acceptance and implementation of the flood action plan. Not knowing *how* the Town will ultimately address flood risks makes it problematic to identify specific barriers to address in any outreach.

Nevertheless, it will be imperative to address residents and business owners whatever the outcome. It will also be key to engage state and local elected officials as they will be important to any future funding requirements.

To that end, a two-step communications effort is proposed (pending development of a comprehensive flood plan):

1. Spread the news. The list of proof points provides a solid foundation of content for delivering our key messages to stakeholders via the channels and platforms described below. We should deliver that content as best we can, given our resources.
  - a. Develop appropriate content as resources allow, i.e., photos, flyers, bill inserts, posters, speech points, web pages, tee shirts, videos, etc.
  - b. Populate current channels/platforms with appropriate proof points, highlighting current achievements/activities. Current channels/platforms include: North Beach webpage, Town email blast, Town social media pages, Town signs, Town businesses, Post Office bulletin board, Welcome Center, resort businesses (rentals, Air BnBs) Farmer’s Market, swag shop, local and regional media (web, print, tv), Town Council meetings.
  - c. Seek public venues (e.g., sustainability community, Town Council meetings, County Commissioner Meetings, SFMAC public meeting) for Town officials or representatives to outline/discuss/present our community’s flood adaptation/sustainability plans and activities. Develop companion presentation or video.
  - d. Proactively reach out to local and state officials (County Commissioners, State Legislators) to outline our community’s flood adaptation/sustainability plans and activities. Develop companion presentation or video.
  - e. Develop appropriate story lines to interest regional media and highlight our flood adaptation/sustainability activities.

2. Check the pulse. Devise and distribute a simple survey (5 - 7 questions) for Town residents and business owners to get a sense of how they: a) understand the flood risks facing the Town, and b) are aware of what the Town is doing to address those risks. The survey may also uncover any hidden issues. The survey could be constructed and tabulated with online tools and distributed via the Town's website. Costs will be minimal. Timing dependent upon rollout of various communications efforts.
3. Long-term goals
  - a. Cultivate and establish a North Beach "champion" in Annapolis.
  - b. Consider additional resources and funding to develop and place key messages/story line on Town's implementation of any flood action measures resulting from the Phase II plan.

#### **Action Item Tracker**

- Distribute news release on receipt of DNR grant, completion of Framework. **(Completed, August 20).**
- Distribute email blast, re: signing up for MyCoastal app. **(Completed, August 30).**
- Distribute news release on 5<sup>th</sup> Street/9<sup>th</sup> Street pump upgrades. **(Drafted, August 20).**
- Draft survey questions. Inaugurate survey.
- Compile speech materials for Mayor's October address to Maryland Planning group. **(Completed, Oct. 7).**
- Draft talking points for Mayor to deliver at Maryland Municipal League Fall Conference (October 12, 2021). Panel discussion on climate resilience **(Completed, Oct. 8).**
- Compile canned talking points for use by Town officials during media contacts **(Completed, September 18. Distribution pending).**
- Distribute news release on awarding of Phase II contract.
- Distribute news release on completion of 5<sup>th</sup> Street pump upgrade (include before and after photos).