Impediments to a Sustainable Recovery

Objectives:

10.1 Discuss federal disaster recovery programs as an entitlement

10.2 Discuss whether disaster recovery programs are creating more vulnerable communities

10.3 Discuss local capability and commitment to sustainable recovery
Factors Contributing to Recovery Programs as an Entitlement

• Supplemental assistance
  – Assistance beyond the Stafford Act
  – Lobbying members of Congress

• Limited restrictions on development in high hazard areas
  – Failure to use existing governmental authority
  – Increased disaster costs
Factors Contributing to Recovery Programs as an Entitlement

- Public expectations
  - Limited financial contribution of local governments
  - Improved notification and delivery

- Limited disincentives / penalties
  - Repetitive damage cycle
  - Moral hazard (Platt 1999)
Factors Contributing to Recovery Programs as an Entitlement

• Additional factors to consider (Platt 1999)
  – The scope of disaster assistance
  – Federal assistance as a means to supplement state and local capabilities
  – Rising disaster costs
    • Disaster Relief Act of 1950
    • Disaster Relief Act of 1970
    • Robert T. Stafford Act
      – Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
Factors Contributing to Recovery Programs as an Entitlement

• Over reliance on supplemental appropriations
  - Ad-hoc creation of rules
  - Rules and special interests
    • Pork barrel politics
    • Challenging disaster assistance requests
Ability to Garner Supplemental Appropriations

• The size and scope of a disaster
  - Larger disasters create an increased level of public concern and publicity

• The timing of a disaster
  - Disasters forgotten over time
  - Omnibus funding packages
  - Pork barrel spending
Ability to Garner Supplemental Appropriations

• The ability of state and local officials to develop a thorough and data-driven request package
  – Federal agency review

• The political power of those members of Congress whose districts were affected
  – Members of appropriation committees
  – Powerful members of Congress
Supplemental Appropriations

• Supplemental appropriations and disaster relief needs
  – Gross estimates of state needs
  – Recapturing allocated funds
Rising Disaster Costs

- Rapid growth in areas subject to repeated disasters
- An increased willingness to declare federal disaster areas
- The reliance on the use of politicized supplemental appropriations
Rising Disaster Costs

• The unwillingness of the federal government to limit disaster assistance to those that undertake meaningful mitigation measures

• Reliance on “engineering approaches”

• Existing federal recovery programs that repair at-risk infrastructure with limited emphasis on mitigation measures
Supplemental Consideration

• Should current disaster relief programs be revised? If so, what specific changes should be made?
  - Evaluating state and local capability
  - Capability and federal aid
  - Disaster assistance and proactive mitigation
  - Current programs and sustainable recovery
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Replacing at-risk infrastructure, housing and critical facilities to their pre-disaster condition

• Upgrading damaged infrastructure

• Public expectations
  – Limited incentives
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

- Cost-sharing

- Commitment to hazard mitigation
  - Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
  - 406 mitigation

- Over reliance on engineering solutions
  - Underutilization of land use measures
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Repair of hazard-prone structures
  – Balancing decisions
    • Funding emphasizes repair versus mitigation
  – Individual Assistance
  – Existing codes
    • Building code
    • Local Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance
    • National Flood Insurance Program
      – No adverse impact
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Construction of flood control levees
  - History of Flood control levees in the U.S.
  - Channeling floodwaters downstream
  - Negative effects
    • Altering the natural functions of floodplains
    • Worsening flooding downstream
    • Encouraging development
    • False sense of security
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Beach renourishment
  - Modification of the natural environment
  - Barrier island migration
  - Intensive development patterns
  - Beach renourishment as a primary means to protect at-risk property
  - Costs
  - Federal funding
  - Encouraging intensive development
  - Maintaining projects over time
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Post-disaster community infrastructure reconstruction
  - Post-disaster public infrastructure reconstruction
  - Guiding development patterns
  - Shaping future vulnerability
  - Federal assistance and the rapid repair of communities
  - Short-versus long-term perspectives
Post-disaster Community Infrastructure Reconstruction

- Examples of post-disaster reconstruction techniques affecting community vulnerability
  - Relocating public facilities
  - Rebuilding at-risk facilities to their pre-disaster condition
    - Public Assistance
    - Encouraging additional development
    - 406 mitigation
Disaster Recovery Programs and Increased Hazard Vulnerability

• Taking a short versus long term perspective
  - Rapid growth in high hazard areas
  - Investment of public infrastructure
  - Federal assistance
  - Bearing the costs of disasters
Class Discussion

• How should communities balance the use of engineering solutions with land use measures to facilitate a sustainable recovery?

• Can engineering solutions be part of a sustainable recovery?
  - Guiding redevelopment
  - Alternatives
    • Preserving existing structures, communities or neighborhoods
    • Selecting the most cost-effective action
Class Discussion

• How should communities balance the use of engineering solutions with land use measures to facilitate a sustainable recovery?

• Can engineering solutions be part of a sustainable recovery?
  – Development decisions and long-term vulnerability
  – Engineering solutions and altering the environment
Class Discussion

• Additional questions
  – Discuss specific post-disaster steps to reduce hazard vulnerability
  – Limiting federal expenditures for the repeated repair of public infrastructure
  – Limiting repeated flood insurance claims
  – Local cost sharing
  – Insurance-based incentives
  – Rewarding communities
Class Discussion

• Identifying examples of reconstruction in high hazard areas and specific mitigation measures that could be adopted
  - Rebuilding homes, roads and other public infrastructure on steep sloped areas
    • Retrofitting techniques
    • Technical and political feasibility
  - Rebuilding of oceanfront property
    • Relocation, elevation, dune repair, beach renourishment, etc.
    • Technical and political feasibility
Local Capability and Commitment to a Sustainable Recovery

• Capability Indicators
  – Fiscal capability
    • Local resources
    • Pre-disaster wealth
    • Savvy local governments and post-disaster aid
      – Capitalizing on mitigation funding
      – Use of local funds
  • Allocation of funds
Local Capability and Commitment to a Sustainable Recovery

• Capability Indicators
  – Technical capability
    • Gathering and analyzing information
      – Geographic Information Systems
      – Technical experts

  – Political Capability
    • Limiting or slowing reconstruction
      – Reconstruction pressures
      – Reviewing recovery options
      – Local growth machine
      – Role of technical experts
Local Capability and Commitment to a Sustainable Recovery

• Commitment
  – Recovery advocate
    • Building local capacity / seeking assistance
      – Expansion of recovery options
    • Lack of a recovery advocate
      – Effect on most needy victims
  • Local power
  • Technical experts
  • Religious leaders
Commitment to a Sustainable Recovery

• Commitment is closely linked with the identification of problems and seeking creative solutions
  - Wide ranging proficiencies of local government officials
  - Linking existing programs
  - Identifying alternative resources
    • Individuals, small groups and organizations
    • Magnified social problems