

2023

ACTION PLAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDS



Lee County
Southwest Florida

Lee Board of County Commissioners
2120 Main Street
Fort Myers, Florida
www.leegov.com/recovery/cdbg-dr

This is a translation of the Executive Summary of Lee County's Action Plan for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Funded provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a result of Hurricane Ian in 2022. Translation and access to the full document is available by following the instructions below.

El condado de Lee ofrece contenido en línea en formatos accesibles para lectores ópticos de caracteres (OCR) y lectores de pantalla. El sitio web del condado de Lee está equipado con opciones para la selección de idiomas. Si tiene problemas para acceder a cualquier contenido web, comuníquese con Samantha Westen al 239-533-2112 o swesten@leegov.com. Para solicitar una adaptación razonable para un formato alternativo, comuníquese con Joan LaGuardia, 239-839-6038 o jlaguardia@leegov.com.

The Lee County Board of County Commissioners del Condado de Lee no tolera la discriminación en ninguno de sus programas, servicios o actividades y no excluirá a nadie de la participación, negará beneficios ni discriminará por motivos de raza, color, origen nacional, sexo, edad, discapacidad, , religión, ingresos o. situación familiar. El condado de Lee tiene un procedimiento de quejas de derechos civiles. Para presentar una queja o leer la política en español sin cargo para el solicitante, comuníquese con el Coordinador de No Discriminación del Título VI del Condado de Lee:

Joan D. LaGuardia
Title VI Nondiscrimination Coordinator
1500 Monroe Street, 4th Floor
Fort Myers FL 33902
jlaguardia@leegov.com
(239) 839-6038 - mobile
Florida Relay Service 711

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that Lee County will receive \$1,107,881,000 in funding to support long-term recovery efforts following Hurricane Ian (FEMA – 4673 – DR) through the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR) within the Office of Community Planning and Development. Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding is designed to address needs that remain after all other assistance has been exhausted. This plan details how funds will be allocated to address remaining unmet needs in Lee County.

To meet disaster recovery needs, the statutes making CDBG-DR funds available have imposed additional requirements and authorized HUD to modify the rules that apply to the annual CDBG program to enhance flexibility and allow for a quicker recovery. HUD has allocated \$1,107,881,000 in CDBG-DR funds to Lee County in response to Hurricane Ian (FEMA – 4673 – DR), through the publication of the Federal Register, 88 FR 32046 (*May 18, 2023*). <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/6393-N-01CDBG-DR-Allocations.pdf>). This allocation was made available through PL 117-328: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.

Lee County's Department of Strategic Resources and Government Affairs (SRGA) is the lead and responsible agency for administering the CDBG-DR funds allocated to Lee County. This Action Plan describes an analysis of the collective local impact of Hurricane Ian (DR 4673), the remaining unmet needs, and the County's plan for distribution of funds to the households and areas of the County most impacted by the storm. Lee County is committed to directing CDBG-DR funds to benefit low- and moderate-income households and areas, in accordance with Section 103 of the Housing and Community Development Act. To ensure that projects are deployed in a timely manner and to streamline the recovery process, HUD provided multiple waivers and flexibilities in 88 FR 32046. Lee County will utilize these waivers and flexibilities as much as possible to ensure quick deployment of funds and a speedy recovery for the community.

B. DISASTER SPECIFIC OVERVIEW

In the past two years, Lee County jumped to the 9th fastest growing county in the U.S. The expanding numbers of secondary homes and growing tourism contributed to the significant strain on the already limited housing and infrastructure capacity. On Wednesday, September 28, 2022, Hurricane Ian made landfall at Cayo Costa as a strong Category 4 hurricane with top wind speeds of 150 mph. It was the largest hurricane to make landfall here and is the fifth largest storm in U.S. history. Over 10 feet of storm surge impacted the barrier islands, Fort Myers Beach, and coastal areas along the Caloosahatchee River. Major infrastructure systems failed, leaving much of the County without access to water. Power grids were destroyed on barrier islands, and severely damaged in inland areas.

The County experienced significant loss in the already strained housing stock because of the storm. More than 9,900 residential units were destroyed, and more than 13,173 residential units suffered major damage. Initial damage assessments show Ian caused more than \$8 billion in damage to residential and commercial structures. It impacted every county beach, all county parks, every traffic signal, and generated an estimated 10 million cubic yards of debris, with 6 million of that collected roadside in unincorporated areas. The storm left more than 130,000 persons in need of housing assistance.

On September 28, 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis requested an expedited federal disaster declaration for Hurricane Ian. The Governor requested FEMA assistance under the Stafford Act for Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for all 67 counties, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and Hazard Mitigation statewide.

On September 29, 2022, President Biden declared that a major disaster existed in the State of Florida. In addition to triggering emergency protective measures, the initial federal response provided funding under the Stafford Act for:

- Individual Assistance to affected individuals and households in Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties;
- Debris removal for Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties;
- Public Assistance for all 67 counties, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida; and
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance for hazard mitigation measures statewide.

The severity and magnitude of Hurricane Ian justified the need for supplemental Federal assistance prior to the completion of joint Federal, State, and local government Preliminary

Damage Assessments (PDAs).

The response to Hurricane Ian was multi-agency and large scale. More than nine months after the storm, recovery remains a challenge for many households and communities. Through June 2023, an official State of Local Emergency remained in effect in Lee County.

As result of Hurricane Ian and ongoing unmet recovery needs, a Congressional allocation of HUD disaster response funding through the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program was made to Lee County. On December 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023” (Public Law 117-328), which included \$3 billion in CDBG-DR funds for major disasters that occurred in 2022.

The projects outlined within this plan were selected through an evaluation of unmet needs resulting from Hurricane Ian (FEMA – 4673 – DR) and an evaluation of risks for future disaster impacts. CDBG-DR funds will support hazard mitigation, planning, and recovery for infrastructure and housing, as well as provide public services and planning to ensure individual household and community-wide recovery and resilience.

In accordance with the Federal Register Notice (88 FR 32046) governing these funds, Lee County submits this Public Action Plan to serve as the blueprint for the successful implementation of CDBG-DR funded programs. This plan may be amended as the needs in the community change post-Ian. **The initial draft plan is being made available for public comment and feedback between August 1, 2023 and August 31, 2023.**

C. SUMMARY

On December 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117-328), which included \$3 billion in CDBG-DR funds for major disasters that occurred in 2022. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers CDBG-DR funds, and grantees are required to submit a plan to the HUD Secretary detailing a recovery plan to address disaster needs. All funds must be allocated for disaster-related eligible activities in accordance with the applicable federal register notices, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Title 24 Section 570 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and Federal Register Notice 88 FR 32046.

The Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program provides communities impacted by disasters with resources to address a wide range of disaster-related needs. CDBG-DR allocations provide funding to develop viable communities, particularly for low-

and moderate-income persons, through decent housing, a suitable living environment, and the expansion of economic opportunities. The primary objectives of this recovery action plan are as follows:

- Create and preserve safe, resilient, and affordable housing opportunities;
- Assist individual property owners to recover from the impacts of Hurricane Ian;
- Restore critical public facilities and infrastructure;
- Mitigate future disaster impacts through infrastructure investments;
- Deliver essential public services that support individual and community-wide recovery;
- and
- Plan for future resiliency.

Through the allocation process HUD identifies most impacted and distressed (MID) areas where CDBG-DR funding must be spent. For this grant, HUD identified all of Lee County as one of those areas. All funded projects and activities must be located in incorporated or unincorporated areas of Lee County, Florida. ***All CDBG-DR allocations will be available for disbursement from the Federal Treasury for approximately six years following the date of execution of the grant agreement.***

Project allocations are based on the best data currently available and reflect projections of need to support the programs. It can be anticipated there will be future adjustments based on actual experience as programs are implemented; however, neither public services, planning, nor administrative expenses will surpass their statutory caps. HUD statutory caps for CDBG-DR are as follows:

- 15% for Public Services
- 15% for Planning
- 5% for Administration

In the development of this disaster recovery action plan, Lee County consulted with disaster-affected citizens, stakeholders, local governments, public housing authorities, and other affected parties in the surrounding geographic area to ensure consistency of disaster impacts identified in the plan, and that the plan and planning process was comprehensive and inclusive. The information gathered through town hall meetings, stakeholder consultations, public meetings, and online public comment submissions were considered during the development of the Action Plan. Additional details regarding Citizen Participation efforts can be viewed in Section X.

Lee County also completed a disaster impact and unmet needs assessment to identify the impacts, long-term needs, and priorities for more than \$1.1 billion of Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding allocated as a result of the 2022 Hurricane Ian event. That assessment identified more than \$8 billion in unmet needs in among housing, infrastructure, and economic revitalization. More than 94% of the overall need is housing and infrastructure.

The unmet needs analysis identified a total housing unmet recovery need of \$4,598,352,445.

FEMA real property damage estimates indicate that there are approximately 18,473 (79.87%) owner-occupied units and 4,655 (20.13%) renter-occupied units that suffered major-high or severe damage. Insurance data indicates that there are an estimated 49.08% of homeowners without insurance. By adding the number renter and owner-occupied units, then dividing by the percent estimated to be uninsured, the County estimates that approximately 11,351 households may need some assistance to fully recover from Hurricane Ian. The County further estimates, based on the overall LMI population, that 41.78%, or 4,742, of these households may be income qualified for CDBG-DR programs.

Lee County will implement the following housing recovery projects to address the unmet housing needs in Lee County:

- Single Family Housing Repair, Reconstruction, and Elevation
- Multi-Family and Rental Housing Rehabilitation and Reconstruction
- New Construction of Affordable Housing Units
- Voluntary Residential Buyouts
- Home Purchase Assistance (i.e., downpayment, closing cost, and mortgage buydown assistance)

The housing programs together will receive \$660,000,000 of the allocated CDBG-DR funds from HUD. This represents approximately 60 percent of the CDBG-DR unmet needs funds allocated to Lee County. Approximately 2,800 households will be provided assistance through the projects listed above.

The unmet needs analysis identified a total infrastructure unmet recovery need of \$3,040,625,610.

The infrastructure systems affected by Hurricane Ian's widespread damage included damage to energy systems, roadways, bridges, traffic controls, water and wastewater treatment systems, septic systems, cell towers, and voice and data services. Transportation was hazardous as water

and debris, including many boats, blocked roads; there were downed trees and power lines, and traffic lights were out. Both the Sanibel Causeway (see Figure 30) and the Matlacha Pass Bridge were severely damaged during the storm and those barrier island areas were inaccessible by car until repairs were made.

Lee County will implement the following infrastructure recovery projects to address the unmet infrastructure needs in Lee County:

- Critical Hurricane Mitigation Grant Program Infrastructure Match Funding
- Critical Infrastructure

The infrastructure programs together will receive \$352,486,950 of the allocated CDBG-DR funds from HUD. This represents approximately 32 percent of the CDBG-DR unmet needs funds allocated to Lee County. Mitigation funds are included in Lee County's total infrastructure budget above and will be used to support improvements to infrastructure that was not impacted by Hurricane Ian.

The unmet needs analysis identified a total economic unmet recovery need of \$440,320,907.

Through the unmet needs assessment and consultation with stakeholders, Lee County has determined that the most impactful programs to support economic revitalization are included in housing and infrastructure programs. For this reason, no CDBG-DR funds will be allocated for economic revitalization programs at this time. Housing programs will support the development and preservation of affordable housing units to support the workforce in the County. Infrastructure projects will provide required improvements to ensure businesses have access to essential services, including roadways, water, and sewer.

The County understands that meeting housing and infrastructure needs will rebuild tourism and increase economic stability. Through recovery task force meetings and consultations, the County has received a substantial number of requests to reduce the non-federal cost share on local municipalities and implement standalone projects. As recovery continues to take place in the County, it is crucial to consider the most effective and efficient use of CDBG-DR funds. See Section IV.I. in the full Action Plan for additional Program Details.

Additional information regarding the County's current unmet needs across HUD's defined sector categories (housing, infrastructure, and economic revitalization) are detailed in the following sections of the full Action Plan:

II.B. Housing Unmet Needs

II.C. Infrastructure Unmet Needs

II.D. Economic Revitalization Unmet Needs

D. UNMET NEEDS AND PROPOSED ALLOCATION

Table 1 – Lee County’s Unmet Needs and Proposed Allocation

Category	Remaining Unmet Need	% of Unmet Need
Housing	\$4,598,352,445	56.92%
Infrastructure	\$3,040,625,610	37.63%
Economic Revitalization	\$440,320,907	5.45%
Total Unmet Needs	\$8,079,298,962	100%

Category	Program Allocation Amount	% of Program Allocation
Housing	\$660,000,000	59.57%
Economic Revitalization	\$0	0%
Infrastructure	\$207,980,950	18.77%
Mitigation	\$144,506,000	13.04%
Planning	\$25,000,000	2.26%
Public Services	\$15,000,000	1.35%
Admin	\$55,394,050	5.00%
Total Allocation	\$1,107,881,000	100%

Source: Unmet needs data compiled for a variety of sources, including, but not limited to the following: FEMA, HUD, Small Business Administration (SBA), National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), Lee County Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers, Lee County Property Appraiser, Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), FEMA Public Assistance (PA), FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Lee County Recovery Task Force (RTF), U.S. Census Bureau (Decennial Census and American Community Survey), The Vulnerability Mapping Analysis Platform (VMAP) Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI), Lee County Continuum of Care, Lee County’s Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) & Joint Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Plan (Lee County Public Safety).