

**Natural Hazard Mapping, Analysis, and Mitigation:
a Technical Background Report in Support of the Safety Element
of the New Riverside County 2000 General Plan**

CHAPTER 5: POLICIES

A government is tasked with the protection of the health, safety and welfare of its citizens. The Safety Element is integral to this mandate. Traditionally, governments have provided emergency response and post-disaster assistance after a natural event devastated its citizens. As the causes of these disasters became better understood, governments undertook efforts to protect citizens through construction efforts designed to overcome and defeat the natural phenomenon. Unfortunately, what government designs, nature can overcome, often leading to a disaster even worse than had the construction never been attempted. The most sustaining form of government intervention in hazard prevention is land use zoning and development restrictions. Each method has costs associated with it. Some costs are immediate, some are deferred. Government on behalf of its citizens, needs to make decisions on how to prioritize its resources to maximize return on protecting its citizens health, safety and welfare.

Planning and managing land use are essential to reduce the County's vulnerability to disasters. Land use planning enables Riverside County to analyze the suitability of land for development. This has also been known for a long time. In 1950, the Truman Administration developed flood mitigation recommendations that adjusted land use through zoning and other measures. Rather than trying to keep the flood out of people's way, the government would work to keep people out of the flood's way. It was simple to explain, but remains difficult to enact. For many reasons, from economic to aesthetic, hazardous areas have appeal. However desirable they may seem, though, policy makers and citizens must understand and accept the limitations of hazard-prone areas.

Flood control programs and methods are currently undergoing dramatic change. Softer, non-structural solutions utilizing flood plain management principles are replacing concrete-based structural measures of the past. But millions of citizens of Riverside County still rely on the existing flood control systems that have been constructed to ensure protection of their lives and property. However, environmental legislation that protects rare and endangered species will continue to make construction and maintenance of flood control structures difficult. In arid environments, twice as many species and about 250 percent more plant cover are associated with natural wash areas, compared with surrounding land.

A "Hazard-Prone Land Acquisition Program" may reduce the costs associated with hazards and mitigation, in addition, home buyers will often pay premiums to live near these open spaces.