EPILOGUE

Flood damage in the United States continues to escalate. Vulnerability of floodplain inhabitants and their property persists; federal, state, and local taxpayer expenditures for disaster relief and recovery continue to grow; and natural functions of floodplains continue to deteriorate.

Community development as practiced in the past was often counterproductive to long-term resiliency and sustainability of our communities. We know that loss of life and property damage can be reduced during most natural events – particularly flooding. However, hastily constructed redevelopment for the sake of returning a community to "normal" as soon as possible was and is too often the goal after a disaster, setting the stage for the next disaster.

It doesn't have to continue this way; there are better options.

We have the opportunity to rethink and start the reversal. Individuals and communities across the nation are beginning to understand this important message – limiting the human-caused contribution to such natural disasters, planning better, developing smarter, and building for sustainability. Building for sustainability in a community may include:

- Retrofitting existing infrastructure, retreating from high natural hazard areas, ensuring the community has proactive zoning authority, building/development codes to reflect unique regional conditions, and the resources to oversee and enforce them.
- Practicing flood risk management, which provides a framework for balancing the multiple complimentary and competing factors that affect risk. Strategies should consider associated risks and opportunities instead of just focusing on the usual structural attempts for managing floodwaters.
- Adopting a "No Adverse Impact" (NAI) floodplain management strategy as proposed by the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM). NAI floodplain management takes place when the actions of one property owner are not allowed to adversely affect the rights of other property owners. The adverse effects or impacts can be measured in terms of increased flood peaks, increased runoff, loss of natural upland and floodplain storage areas, loss of floodplain flow area, higher flood velocities, increased erosion and sedimentation, or other impacts the community considers important.
- Local community mitigation, including mitigating damage from increased runoff from urbanizing areas, improved land use practices, better emergency management, and workable systems for warning and evacuation.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking of the devastating 1927 Mississippi River valley flood, said he "envisioned a nation that refused to leave the problems of our common welfare to be solved by the winds of chance and the hurricanes of disaster."

This call for sustainable flood plain management still rings true. At this time, the many stakeholders of the North Branch Elkhart River basin have an opportunity to practice innovative sustainable flood plain management, to educate future stakeholders, to mitigate past limited planning efforts, to improve their community, to reduce future flood damages, and an opportunity to be seen as a community that is a model for others in the nation to follow. It is possible to have success, measured when foreseeable flooding events will not cause personal disasters.

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