



FEMA Flood Insurance Maps Update



April 12, 2011



Overview

- Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) for El Paso Community released in June, 2010
- Stems from national effort to modernize maps
- Proposed changes from current/effective maps:
 - Approx. 9,000 properties now removed from floodplain
 - Approx. 5,300 properties mapped into the floodplain
 - Upper Valley Area largest impact

Parcels in Floodplain by Area

	Total	LV	NE	East	Central	UV	West
Current	33,233	9,342	8,334	3,780	2,493	3,516	5,768
2010 Preliminary	24,484	4,620	6,007	1,230	2,204	8,815	1,608
Difference	-8,749	-4,722	-2,327	-2,550	-289	+5299	-4160



Current Appeal/Protest Period

- Effective March 4, 2011-June 2, 2011
 - 90-day appeal and protest period for residents and property owners
 - Opportunity to provide comments and technical information regarding the Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Flood Insurance Study
 - Appeal/Protest requires scientific or technical information
 - Supporting documentation required



Background: *Mapping Process*

- Nationwide Map Modernization initiative undertaken by FEMA in 2005 / 2006
- Used standard approximate mapping methods
 - Existing maps digitized and refined
 - Integrated GIS mapping, new contours & orthophotography
 - FEMA team looked at existing floodplains and used new mapping information
 - “Without Levee” modeling method implemented
 - Limited Base Flood Elevations created
- Resulted in removing several properties unnecessarily in the floodplain
- Added some property into the flood plain
 - Primarily due to “without levee” analysis



“Without Levee” Modeling Method

- On August 22, 2005, FEMA issued Procedure Memorandum 34
 - Defined rationale/work flow by which levees are considered for floodplain mapping purposes
 - If levee can't be accredited, floodplain studied & mapped as if the levee does not exist
 - “Accredited” means sealed by a Registered Professional Engineer as structurally stable with appropriate drainage and freeboard
- While not as precise as more detailed methods, rationale technically sound
 - If levee can not be accredited, difficult for an engineer to say that it will provide reliable protection without more detailed information



Recent FEMA actions

- February, 2011- FEMA received an official request from several members of Congress requesting:
 - “Without levee” analysis be discontinued
- FEMA now pursuing new detailed study
 - More precise methods for areas impacted by levees
 - New approach applied to ongoing & new mapping
 - Findings may indicate greater flood risk than previously understood
- Within the past few weeks:
 - FEMA decided **to delay finalizing maps for communities where a levee cannot be accredited until new approach complete**
 - A specific timeframe has not been established
 - Proper consideration of new modeling



Impact to El Paso Community

- FEMA will be sending letters to affected communities in next few weeks
- Preliminary commitment to accept appeals/protests and comments AFTER the June 2, 2011 date
- Re-visiting position that all map panels for the County of El Paso will be made effective by the same Letter of Final Determination
 - May take approach of making panels effective that are not affected by the levee certification issue
 - GREAT news for the City Of El Paso
 - Would allow maps to become effective for approximately 14,000 parcels that are proposed for removal OUT of flood plain



Related Activities

- IBWC Levee Improvements
 - Westside of river (Stateline to Mesilla Dam)
 - Expected completion Spring 2012
 - Eastside of river
 - To be determined
 - Will provide FEMA data requirements for Levee accreditation as work is executed



Next Steps

- Formal comment/request that FEMA provide a more detailed study replacing the “without levee” analysis for preliminary FIRMs issued to El Paso
 - Appeal/protest would require technical information
- Continue coordination with Congressman Reyes’ Office, congressional lobbyist and International Boundary & Water Commission
- Formal comment/request that FEMA consider making panels effective that are not affected by levee certification issue
- Property owners and industry professionals can continue to submit comments, protest/appeals for forwarding to FEMA



Flood Zone Information

- To view current and proposed maps:
City's homepage www.elpasotexas.gov under News & Notices, *FEMA Flood Zone Maps*
- All appeal/ protest information must be submitted to Floodplain Administration for the City not FEMA
 - Information may be submitted electronically at floodzones@elpasotexas.gov
 - Mailing address and phone number:
Floodplain Administration
2 Civic Center Plaza-4th
El Paso, Texas 79901
541-4200
- Properties outside city limits must contact the County Floodplain Administrator (546-2015)



Comments/Questions