



City of Gulfport

May 2006

Community Development Department

Annual Flood Protection Newsletter

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

In January 1999, the City of Gulfport adopted its Floodplain Management Plan to replace its previously adopted Repetitive Loss Plan. The Floodplain Management Plan investigates the areas subject to flooding and flood hazards, assesses flooding problems, determines goals to reduce flooding hazards, develops possible strategies, and then implements an action plan. The City must annually monitor and evaluate the Floodplain Management Plan.

The City investigates and implements many projects designed to reduce flood damage including; the possible purchase of low-lying and flood prone land, formalizing and increased its storm drainage and maintenance procedures. The Building Department continues to update and enforce our floodplain and building codes. We coordinate with other local government agencies on flood warning programs. City staff has developed an Emergency Management Preparedness Plan. This plan was revised during 1994 and will be updated annually.

The following nine flood-related topics and flood hazard map are provided for information, protection, and action against flood hazards. We encourage everyone to read and do what they can to protect themselves and their property.

FLOOD HAZARD

The City of Gulfport is located on the shores of Boca Ciega Bay. The land is characterized by flat terrain that slopes from an elevation of sea level to three feet in various locations along the

waterfront to nearly forty feet in the northeast area. Approximately one third of the City is

located within the 100-year floodplain mapped and adopted by the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA). The flood hazard map for Gulfport, included in this newsletter, was revised by FEMA in 2002. As a result of those changes, approximately 300

additional homes are now included within the 100-year



floodplain. This area may experience flooding during storms and 100 year flood events.

Causes contributing to flooding include stormwater runoff created by an inadequate storm sewer system, and low ground elevations resulting in salt water flooding from high tides of Boca Ciega Bay backing up through the storm sewer system. Many times, rain will saturate the ground and add to the street, sidewalk and driveway runoff. Maps that show local flood hazard areas can be viewed at the Community Development Department at the City Hall Complex, and on the City of Gulfport internet website at www.ci.gulfport.fl.us (select "Most Requested Pages," then Documents and Publications list).

FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM

The City of Gulfport participates in a flood warning system designed by the Pinellas County Disaster Committee and the Pinellas County Emergency Operations Center. The City coordinates activities, such as flood and storm warnings, evacuations, and recovery operations.

The City has its own Emergency Preparedness Plan that goes into effect for a variety of disasters, including flooding. Fire and police mobile units warn residents in flood prone areas of actual emergency conditions. Residents should follow the directions of the police and fire units when these warnings are sounded.

Local TV and radio stations issue flood watches (when conditions favor flooding) and flood warnings (flood is eminent). Stay tuned to local radio and television stations for emergency broadcasts. The following is a list of some major local television and radio stations:

Television

- WFLA Channel 8
<http://www.wfla.com>
- Bay News 9 Weather
<http://baynews9.com/Weather.html>
- WTSP Channel 10
<http://www.tampabays10.com/weather/>
- WTVT Channel 13
<http://www.wtvt.com/>
- WFTS Channel 28
<http://www.wfts.com/>

AM Radio Stations

- WGUL 860
<http://www.860wgul.com/>
- WEOC 940 (Pinellas County's Emergency Operations Center radio station)
www.co.pinellas.fl.us/bcc/emergency/
- WFLA 970
<http://www.970wfla.com/main.html>

FM Radio Stations

- WMNF 88.5
www.wmnf.org

FM Radio Continued

- WUSF 89.7
www.wusf.org
- WMTX 100.7 (Emergency Alert System's primary disaster info radio station)
<http://www.wmtx.com/main.html>
- WWRM 94.9 (Emergency Alert System's secondary disaster info radio station)
<http://949online.com/>

The National Weather Service hosts a special FM high-band frequency at 162.55 megahertz with up-to-date information. Visit the City of Gulfport's official website at www.ci.gulfport.fl.us for weather information. The following are additional websites for emergency information: www.weather.com; www.nws.noaa.gov; www.tvweather.com; www.fema.gov.

FLOOD SAFETY

1. Know the flood warning procedures. Stay tuned to local radio and television stations for evacuation information. Evacuate the flood hazard area in times of impending flood or when advised to do so by the police or fire department.
2. Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths. Do not attempt to go across flowing floodwaters. Currents can be deceptive; six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. Use a pole or stick to determine depth if you walk in standing/still water.
3. Keep children away from floodwater, ditches, culverts, and storm drains. Currents can be very strong and floodwaters can contain contaminants hazardous to humans.
4. If your vehicle stalls in high water, abandon it immediately and seek high ground. Vehicles can and will float making them susceptible to currents. Eventually, however, a floating vehicle will come to rest and sink.

5. Use caution walking inside a flooded structure, which could contain debris, slippery mud or silt, or even snakes, small rodents and poisonous insects. Use a pole or stick to investigate underneath or behind debris and to test the depth of mud or silt.
6. Turn off utility services by cutting off all electrical circuits at the fuse panel or disconnect switch. If this is not possible, turn off and disconnect all electrical appliances, and shut off the water service and gas valves in your home. Use a flashlight to inspect damage. Do not smoke or use matches, flames, lanterns, or candles unless you know the gas has been shut off and the area well ventilated.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Standard homeowner's insurance policies do not cover losses due to floods. Therefore the City of Gulfport participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to ensure that property owners (including previously flooded properties) can receive federally backed flood insurance. This insurance is available to any owner of insurable property (a building and its contents) within the City through their home insurance agent. Tenants may also insure their personal property against flood loss through an insurance agent.

Actual costs will vary depending upon the amount of coverage and degree of flood hazard for your property. The City of Gulfport urges those who live in flood hazard areas to purchase flood insurance to protect potential losses due to flooding. This insurance is required in certain instances, such as the purchase of a home with a federally backed mortgage.

Flood insurance covers all surface floods; and for the best protection your flood insurance should include coverage for both the structure and the contents. Statistics of flooding in

Gulfport show that considerable damage has occurred to both structures and the content of the structures most likely due to the depth of flooding during major storms and heavy rain events.

PROPERTY PROTECTION MEASURES

Some protection measures include: elevating electrical panel boxes, furnaces, water heaters, washers/dryers, and furniture above the base flood elevation or relocating to a location less likely to flood. If a flood is eminent all gas and electricity should be shut off and valuable contents moved to a higher location.

Additional measures could include installing flood drains, and backflow preventers for water lines, placing interior flood walls around utilities, and installing plugs or standpipes to prevent sewer back ups. Deeper sewer back up problems can be solved with overhead sewers or backup valves.

Other flood proofing or retrofitting approaches involve making walls waterproof and placing watertight closures over doorways. Also keep materials like sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber for emergency waterproofing. Another action to help minimize the amount of damage caused by floodwater is to regrade your lot or build a small floodwall or earthen berm.

More information on flood proofing or retrofitting is available at the Gulfport Municipal Library, and the City's Community Development Department staff can provide technical assistance.

FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

The City of Gulfport adopted regulations on new development and redevelopment in floodplains. The purpose of such regulations is to control the alteration of natural runoff and storm runoff channels, to prevent or regulate construction of flood barriers that divert flood waters or that could increase flood hazards in other areas, to restrict or prohibit

uses resulting in increased damage by erosion, flood velocities or flood heights; and to control filling, grading or other development that may increase flood damages.

Development and redevelopment of structures must follow regulations specific to flood zone construction. Structures are permitted within flood zones provided they meet base flood level elevation standards.

It is very important to contact the Gulfport Community Development Department's Building, Permitting, and Inspections Division prior to performing any type of construction or renovation work in flood hazard areas as the regulations are extensive and permits are required. Report any illegal floodplain development to the Code Enforcement Division at 727-893-1061.

SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENT

A substantial improvement to a structure is any rehabilitation, addition or other improvement of a building whereby the cost of the improvement equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the building prior to any improvements. Substantial improvements must meet the same construction requirements as new construction, and substantially damaged structures must be brought up to the same standards.

Substantial improvements, however, do not include improvements to a building to correct existing health or sanitary code violations as identified by the City to ensure safe living conditions.

As a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program, the City of Gulfport enforces the substantial improvement requirement. The City's Building, Permitting, & Inspections Division, 727-893-1024, can inform and answer questions about the requirement and all local enforcement procedures. City personnel can review and

discuss your building plans as they relate to flood zones, building requirements, and zoning requirements.

DRAINAGE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

The City of Gulfport has a storm drainage system consisting of both open and closed segments. The open sections are drainage swales, ponds and small lakes. The closed sections are comprised of storm water inlets and piping which also carry water from street and development runoff to drainage areas and finally to Boca Ciega Bay.

Maintenance of these systems is very important. Debris in the swales, catch basins and pipes obstructs the flow of water causing overflow onto roads and into yards. Partial or complete filling of these storm sewer systems reduces the flood flow capacity, also resulting in flooding of streets and yards. The City must maintain these systems to an adequate flood flow capacity. To achieve this, the City's Public Works Department has formalized its storm sewer system maintenance procedures. City personnel clear and perform other maintenance work on the system at least two times per year. Some locations are maintained four times per year. Work is also performed on an emergency basis in problematic areas as needed.

In addition to City performed maintenance, residents are expected to perform routine maintenance on ditches located on right-of-ways along the perimeter of their properties. Such maintenance includes the removal of high weeds, litter, debris or other items considered a nuisance. Property shall also be maintained so that water cannot become stagnant, and breeding areas are not provided for mosquitoes.

Several of the City's efforts depend upon your cooperation and assistance. You can help by:

1. Always check with the Building, Permitting, & Inspections Division before you build new buildings or alter existing buildings, and before you regrade, or fill your property. A permit is needed to ensure that projects do not negatively affect adjacent properties.
2. Do not dump or throw anything into ditches or ponds. Dumping in our ditches and ponds is a code violation. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and plug channels. A plugged channel cannot carry water and when it rains the water has to go somewhere. Every piece of trash contributes to flooding.
3. If your property is next to a ditch or pond, please do your part and keep the banks clear of brush and debris.
4. If you see building or filling without a City permit sign posted, or if you see illegal dumping contact the City's Code Enforcement Division at 727-893-1061.
5. If you see excess debris in ditches or ponds, or a storm sewer catch basin that is slow to drain or does not drain runoff contact the City's Public Works Department, at 727-893-1089.

NATURAL AND BENEFICIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE GULFPORT FLOODPLAIN

Gulfport's floodplain plays an important role during those times when the lowland areas are covered by water during a flood, because the floodplain carries and stores flood waters, thereby protecting human life and property from flood damage.

The Gulfport floodplain contains natural and developed areas that have benefits for all of us, including:

1. Habitat for Plants and Animals. Mangroves, trees and other vegetative growth found along the natural shoreline within Clam Bayou and the Pasadena Yacht and Country Club provide important resting, feeding and nesting areas for many waterfowl species. These areas have a natural biological diversity and are productive for birds, fish and other wildlife. The mangroves provide an ecosystem that captures nutrients and plant debris and serve as prime nurseries for fish, shrimp, crabs and waterfowl. As an added bonus, the roots protect the shorelines from wind and wave erosion.
2. Water Quality. Vegetation and soils found within our City's floodplain serve as water filters, intercepting surface water runoff before reaching Boca Ciega Bay. This process aids in the removal of excess nutrients, pollutants and sediments from the water. In turn, the need for costly clean up from pollutants and sediment removal is reduced. Stormwater management is provided, within developed areas of the floodplain, through a system of pipes and swales leading to detention/retention ponds that provide improved water quality for surface water entering Boca Ciega Bay. The newly created lake at Wood Ibis Park is an excellent example of a water quality project.
3. Preservation and Creation of Green Space. The City of Gulfport preserved and created some exciting, unique, and beautiful green spaces within its floodplain. Clam Bayou, Clam Bayou Nature Park, Gulfport Veteran's Memorial Park, the Municipal Beach, and Wood Ibis Park

are all examples of green spaces in floodplain areas that serve multiple uses and purposes. Flood hazard retention, wetland protection, fish and wildlife habitat improvement, outdoor education, and recreational opportunities are some of the benefits of these green spaces.

The City encourages all of its residents to visit these parks. Note the values and benefits provided in addition to enjoying the beautiful aesthetics of Boca Ciega Bay and the parks.

Many options are available for all residents to help prevent flooding and flood damage. You can start by reading and keeping this newsletter. Visit our Municipal Library located at 5501 28th Avenue South, for additional information available to you. The City's Community Development Department can determine if you live in, or own property in a flood hazard zone. City staff can also discuss flood proofing options and review flood protection measures. If you have any questions on flood zones, or any other information provided in this newsletter, please contact the Community Development Department at 893-1000.



The above photo depicts historical flooding along Beach Boulevard in the City of Gulfport.

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