

REVISED LEGISLATIVE DIGEST
(Amended in Committee, 10/19/2020)

[Administrative Code - Floodplain Management and Flood Insurance Requirements]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to update the City's floodplain management requirements to conform to current Federal floodplain management and National Flood Insurance Program criteria; to remove obsolete provisions; and affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Existing Law

Sections 2A.280 - 2A.285 of the San Francisco Administrative Code provide for the administration of the City's floodplain management program. The Code designates the City Administrator as the Floodplain Administrator, whose duties and responsibilities include providing oversight and guidance for the administration of floodplain management requirements and policies, designating flood prone areas within the City, maintaining and updating flood prone area maps for public review and use, and providing floodplain management reports and information as required by applicable federal, state and local requirements.

The Code requires that all new construction and substantial improvements in designated flood prone areas shall:

- Be designed (or modified) and adequately anchored to prevent flotation, collapse, or lateral movement of the structure resulting from hydrodynamic and hydrostatic loads, including the effects of buoyancy.
- Be constructed:
 - So that the lowest floor, including basement, is elevated one foot above the design flood elevation; or (for non-residential structures) floodproofed to this level.
 - With materials and utility equipment resistant to flood damage.
 - Using methods and practices that minimize flood damage.
- Include electrical, heating, ventilation, plumbing and air conditioning equipment and other service facilities that are designed and/or located so as to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during conditions of flooding.

The Code also requires that subdivision proposals in flood-prone areas be reviewed to assure that:

- All such proposals are consistent with the need to minimize flood damage within the flood prone area;

- All public utilities and facilities such as sewer, gas, electrical, and water systems are located and constructed to minimize or eliminate flood damage; and
- Adequate drainage is provided to reduce exposure to flood hazards.

Variations or exceptions can be issued for projects involving extraordinary hardship, historic preservation and, in the case of the Port, functionally dependent maritime uses.

Amendments to Current Law

The proposed amendments include changes to reflect the completion by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of its final Flood Insurance Risk Map (FIRM) for San Francisco by adding and deleting language to accurately describe the current status of the FIRM. The amendments also clarify the applicability of specified building standards in the San Francisco Building Code that become applicable to development projects on the City's adoption of the FIRM, which establishes special flood hazard areas for portions of San Francisco that are susceptible to flooding from the Bay and Ocean.

The amendments add definitions for development, floodplains and flood prone areas, manufactured homes, and recreational vehicles. The amendments clarify the floodplain administration duties of the City Administrator. The amendments also describe the authority of the Airport and Public Utilities Commissions under the Charter to manage construction in accordance with the building standards applicable to each department's construction activities.

Background Information

The floodplain management program is primarily intended to protect human life and health, minimize expenditure of public money for costly flood control projects, ensure that property owners and residents are notified that property is in an area of special flood hazard, and ensure that those who occupy the areas of special flood hazard assume responsibility for their actions.

Permits and approvals issued by appropriate City departments for buildings and structures in flood prone areas must ensure that compliance with the floodplain management standards provided by the ordinance are achieved. These standards will also apply to City projects located outside the boundaries of the City.

Under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), FEMA provides financial backing to enable residents and businesses in the community to obtain affordable flood insurance in exchange for the adoption of floodplain management regulations by the community participating in the program. Participation in the NFIP enables businesses and residents

within flood prone areas to obtain certain forms of loans and disaster assistance, as well as flood insurance.

City participation in the NFIP and adoption of floodplain regulations at Sections 2A.280 - 2A.285 of the San Francisco Administrative Code provide all City residents, regardless of whether they are located in a designated flood-prone area, the opportunity to obtain flood insurance that will cover damages resulting from storm-caused flooding.

FEMA has prepared a FIRM for the City. The map provides flood risk information for flood insurance and floodplain management purposes under the NFIP. The amendments will update the current floodplain management program to reflect adoption of the FIRM and to delete obsolete provisions. The amendments will ensure consistency with NFIP requirements applicable to FEMA-mapped communities.