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MAYOR

**CITY OF ATLANTA**  
DEPARTMENT OF WATERSHED MANAGEMENT  
72 Marietta Street, NW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Mikita Browning  
COMMISSIONER

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Georgia Association of Realtors  
6065 Barfield Road  
Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Re: Floodplain Restrictions in the City of Atlanta

Dear Realtors Association Members:

The City of Atlanta regulates land use and prohibits development within the 100-year floodplain. Floodplains that fall under these regulations are identified as "Special Flood Hazard Area" (SFHA) on maps, known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On these maps the "100 year" floodplain limits indicate land areas which are subject to a 1% chance of flooding during rain events. The "500 year" floodplain limits indicate land which may be subject to a 0.2% chance of flooding under extreme weather events but are not considered part of the SFHA.

### **FLOODPLAIN DETERMINATION**

The following resources are available to you. Some of these may require a high level of understanding of floodplain regulations and terminology or a familiarity with mapping systems.

1. The Department of Watershed Management flood information webpage:  
<https://www.atlantawatershed.org/floodplainmgmt/>
2. [FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer \(Official\)](#) - This is current FEMA floodplain information served by an ArcGIS web map. Addresses and places can easily be searched. Remember to select an appropriate "Basemap".
3. [City of Atlanta Floodplain Ordinance](#) - The Municode service maintains the City's Floodplain Ordinance online.
4. [FEMA Mapping Information Platform](#) - This website allows the user to type in a property address and find the flood hazard information from FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer. These maps are the most up to date maps that FEMA has, which is not necessarily the best available data.

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5. [FEMA Map Service Center](#) - This website allows the user to type in a property address and find the official FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). These maps are used for official flood insurance determinations.
6. [Georgia Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps \(DFIRM\)](#) - The Georgia DFIRM website houses digital FIRMs for the State of Georgia. This is an excellent tool to help one determine whether the subject property is in the SFHA.
7. If there are any specific questions, contact the City of Atlanta Floodplain Administrator, Craig Rethwilm, at [crethwilm@atlantaga.gov](mailto:crethwilm@atlantaga.gov), or by phone at 404-546-3291. Please be sure to include the street address of the property when sending or leaving a message.
8. If the property is not located within the City of Atlanta, I will still be happy to assist in any way I can. For more specific information, please contact the Floodplain Manager/Administrator for the appropriate City/County.

#### **FLOODPLAIN CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS**

**If a property within the City of Atlanta is found to be in or near the floodplain and you are planning a project for that property, you can use the link below to learn more about what uses are allowed: [City of Atlanta Floodplain Ordinance](#).**

The City of Atlanta and FEMA have developed an additional floodplain classification called the Historically Modified Floodplain. This is shown on the City's official FEMA flood maps as a Shaded Zone X, which is equivalent to the 500-year flood. These areas are shown to indicate areas of possible stormwater ponding during heavy rain events, but do not make flood insurance mandatory for the property owners.

**Within the City of Atlanta, NO NEW CONSTRUCTION IS ALLOWED WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL FLOODPLAIN. NO FILL WHATSOEVER IS ALLOWED WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL FLOODPLAIN.**

- Any new construction must be set back a minimum of 15 feet (as measured horizontally) outside of the SFHA, and the lowest livable floor (including a basement) must be a minimum of two (2) feet higher than the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) for the property.
- If a structure already exists within the floodplain, and it cannot be moved outside the 15-foot floodplain buffer, then it can be improved in place, or demolished and rebuilt on the original footprint.
- If the improvements equal or exceed 50% of the value of the structure (NOT including the land), then the structure is considered to have been "Substantially Improved" (SI). Once this threshold is reached, cumulative over any 10-year

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period, then the structure must be elevated such that the lowest living floor is three (3) feet higher than the BFE. The lowest floor must be constructed with flood-resistant materials and must be constructed such that flood waters may flow unrestricted. That lowest level may only be used for ancillary uses such as parking, storing equipment, and other miscellaneous storage.

- All mechanical and electrical equipment must also be elevated to at least three (3) feet above the BFE.

If a property, after having been purchased, is determined to have been "Substantially Improved" by the previous Owner, the new Owner is responsible for the elevation of the structure and any other improvements needed to bring it into compliance with FEMA and the City of Atlanta regulations.

It is important that Realtors are aware of the floodplain restrictions in the City of Atlanta and in the various cities and counties in the Metro area, and that they inform prospective home buyers and sellers about the legal ramifications of their actions and purchases.

Please feel free to contact me for general floodplain questions concerning any location in the entire metro Atlanta area.

Sincerely



Craig Rethwilm, P.E., CFM

Floodplain Administrator, City of Atlanta

404-546-3291

[crethwilm@atlantaga.gov](mailto:crethwilm@atlantaga.gov)

CC: Rose Connolly P.E., CFM – Watershed Director 1, Office of Site Development