



# FLOOD MAPS ARE CHANGING...

## What You Should Know

## MAPPING THE RISK

### New Flood Maps Mean Changes in Flood Risk for Stow.

A multi-year project to re-examine flood risks and develop detailed, digital flood hazard maps is nearing completion. Using the latest technologies and most current data, new preliminary flood maps have been released that more accurately reflect today's flood risks. As a result, property owners throughout Stow will have up-to-date, reliable, Internet-accessible information about their flood risk. And property owners will learn that their risk is higher, or lower, than they thought. As someone with a stake in Stow's future, you should be aware of how the maps are changing and why—and how the changes will affect residents and business owners alike.

### Flood Maps: a Risk Management Must

Flood hazard maps, also known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), are important tools in the effort to protect lives and properties in Stow. By showing the extent to which areas of Stow are at risk for flooding, flood maps help business owners and residents make more informed decisions about protecting their

property and financial stability. These maps also allow community planners, local officials, engineers, builders and others to make important determinations about *where* and *how* new structures and developments should be built.

To ensure that everyone within Stow has access to the most accurate and up-to-date information about flood risks, the new maps are being made available for public view and review.

### A Better Picture of Flood Hazards

Over time, water flow and drainage patterns have changed dramatically due to surface erosion, land use and natural forces. The likelihood of inland and riverine flooding in certain areas has changed along with these factors. New digital maps [along with more accurate ground elevation data as well as updated rainfall and other data] provide more detailed, reliable and current information about flood risks. The result: a better picture of the areas most likely to be impacted by flooding and a better foundation from which to make key decisions.

The flood map update project is a collaborative effort between Stow

and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in cooperation with association and private sector partners.

1/14/2013 — Preliminary maps released

[TBD] — Flood Risk Open House

[TBD] — Start of 90-day Public Comment Period (for filing of appeals and comments)

Summer 2014\* — New flood maps become effective; new flood insurance requirements take effect

Visit [http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA\\_Planning/index](http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA_Planning/index) to see the preliminary maps and learn when map changes take effect

**For General Information Call** the Stow Planning Department at 978-897-5098.

Open 9-5 p.m. Mon. - Fri.

*\*Date subject to change pending completion of review process*

## Flood Insurance Requirements and Options

When the new maps are adopted, flood insurance requirements will change. However, options exist that will allow property owners to save money while still protecting their property.

IF MAPS SHOW...	THESE REQUIREMENTS, OPTIONS AND SAVINGS APPLY
Change from moderate to low flood risk to high risk	<p><b>Flood insurance is mandatory.</b> Flood insurance will be required* for most mortgage holders. Insurance costs may rise to reflect the risk.</p> <p><b>Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) Two-Year Eligibility Extension &amp; "Grandfathering" offers savings.</b> The National Flood Insurance Program extended the eligibility period of low-cost PRPs for two years for properties newly mapped into a high-risk zone. In addition, there are "grandfathering" rules to recognize policyholders who have built in compliance with the flood map or who have maintained continuous coverage. Your client's insurance agent can provide more details on how to save.</p>
Change from high flood risk to moderate to low risk	<p><b>Flood insurance is not required by federal law, but recommended. The risk has only been reduced, not removed.</b> Flood insurance can still be obtained, but at lower rates. More than 20 percent of all flood insurance claims come from policies in moderate- and low-risk areas.</p> <p><b>Conversion offers savings.</b> An existing policy may qualify to be converted to a lower-cost PRP.</p>
No change in risk level	<p><b>No change in insurance rates.</b> This is a good time for property owners to visit their insurance agent for a policy review.</p>

## Flood Risks and Flood Zones

Flood maps refer to areas of high, moderate or low risk as "flood hazard zones" and the zones of highest risk as "Special Flood Hazard Areas."

RISK LEVEL	FLOOD HAZARD ZONE
Change from moderate to low flood risk to high risk	<p><b>AE, A, AR, A99, AH, or AO Zone.</b> These properties have a 1-percent chance of flooding in any year—and a 26 percent chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage.</p> <p><b>VE or V Zone.</b> These properties have a 1-percent chance of flooding in any year and also face hazards associated with coastal storm surge and wave action.</p> <p><b>Insurance note:</b> High-risk areas are called Special Flood Hazard Areas, and flood insurance is mandatory for most mortgage holders.*</p>
Change from high flood risk to moderate or low risk	<p><b>Shaded X Zone.</b> These properties are outside the high-risk zones. The risk is reduced, but not removed.</p> <p><b>X Zone.</b> These properties are in an area of overall lower risk.</p> <p><b>Insurance note:</b> Lower-cost preferred rate flood insurance policies (known as PRPs) are often an option in these areas.</p>

\* Federally regulated and insured lenders are mandated, by federal law, to require flood insurance on buildings for which they issued a loan that are located in high-risk flood zones.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** Visit [http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA\\_Planning/index](http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA_Planning/index) to view the new digital flood maps, see the areas that are changing flood zones, and learn how Stow will be affected. Visit [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov) for more information about how to protect against flooding and the steps local residents may need to take to ensure that they have proper insurance coverage to protect their investment.