



Memo

Date: August 1, 2025
To: Seattle City Councilmembers
From: Kye Lee, Interim Director
Subject: Interim Floodplain Development Regulations 9th Extension

Summary of floodplain regulations: These regulations required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) apply when property owners apply to the City for development permits. They generally require raising the first floor of a new building above the anticipated flood levels and require buildings to be engineered to withstand storm winds and excessive flooding. Citywide, there are approximately 2,000 properties located in floodplains (see accompanying map).

Recent City Council action on floodplain regulations: To remain in compliance with FEMA, City Council adopted interim floodplain regulations in July 2020 and extended these regulations eight times. This allows the City to remain in compliance with FEMA requirements while working with interested parties, including the Port of Seattle and owners of the Central Waterfront piers and businesses, on legislation for permanent floodplain regulations.

Background: The City's floodplain development regulations have been in place since 1989 and vary by specific flood hazard zone and the type of development proposed. Between 2013 and February 2020, FEMA issued and conducted a public process to finalize new Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Seattle. The maps updated the properties identified that are at risk of flooding and required by FEMA to have flood insurance. In order to remain in compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the City was required to adopt updated floodplain regulations that include these maps and additional amendments to comply with the code of federal regulations.

In July 2021 SDCI issued the environmental (SEPA) decision on proposed permanent floodplain regulations. This decision was appealed by the Port of Seattle. SDCI worked to resolve issues raised by the Port and issued a new SEPA decision in August 2024. This new SEPA decision was not appealed; however, the owners of the Central Waterfront piers and businesses came forward with concerns.

SDCI modified the legislative proposal to address many of these concerns and now has a final version of the proposed permanent legislation and is planning to publish a SEPA Addendum in the next three weeks. After public comment is considered, SDCI will bring the Permanent Floodplain Regulations to you for discussion and deliberation. This extension allows us time to receive feedback, take the necessary steps prior to bringing this to you, and take into account the 30-day effective date.

Attachment: Map of Special Flood Hazard Areas

2020 Flood Insurance Rate Map(FIRM) Flood Hazard Areas and Current ECA Flood Prone Areas



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Legend

2020 FIRM Flood Zone Hazard Areas

High Risk Flood Zones

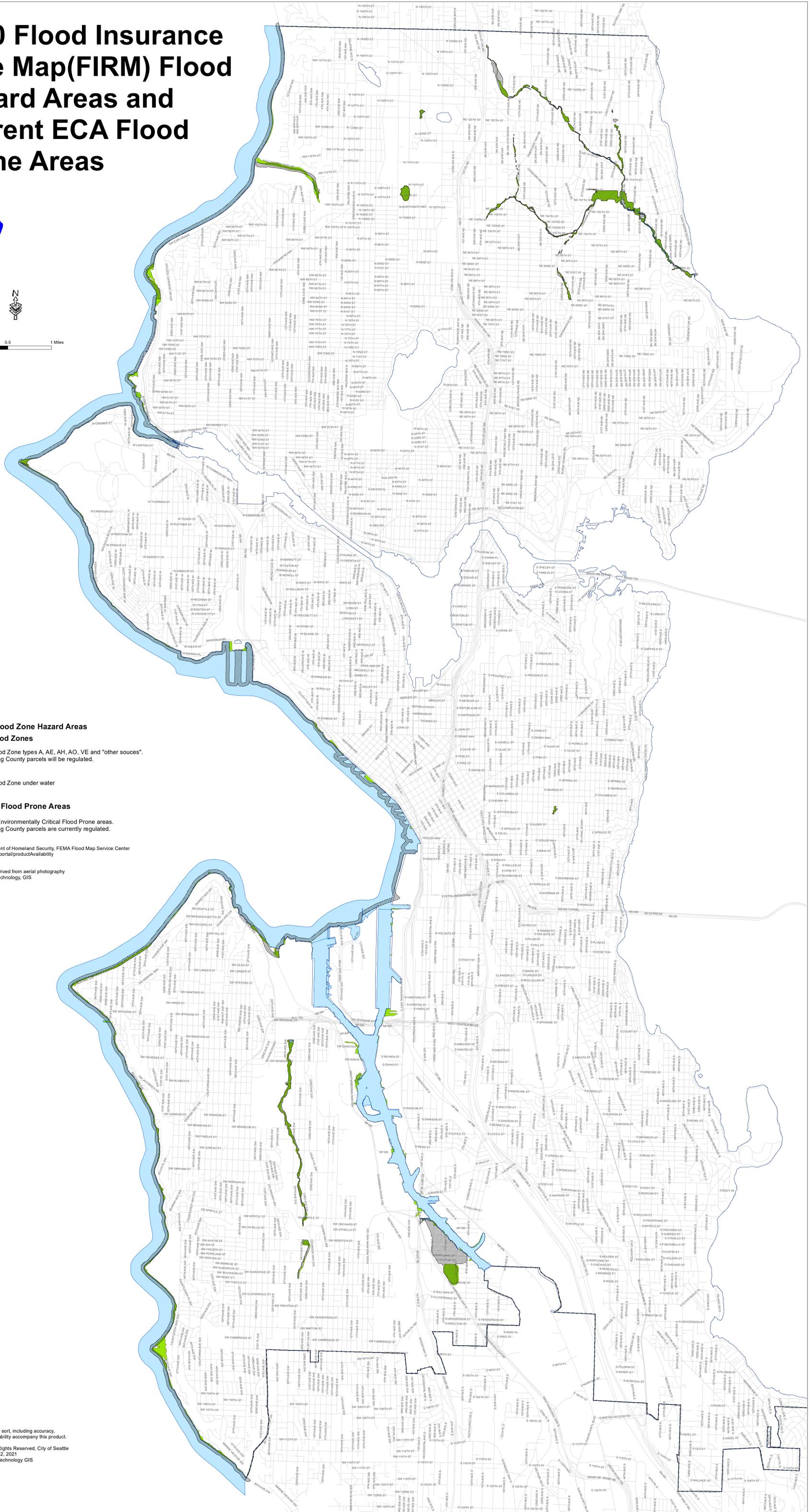
 2020 Flood Zone types A, AE, AH, AO, VE and "other sources".
2,033 King County parcels will be regulated.

 2020 Flood Zone under water

Current ECA Flood Prone Areas

 Current Environmentally Critical Flood Prone areas.
1,970 King County parcels are currently regulated.

Source: US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Flood Map Service Center
<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/products/availability>
 FEMA FIRM 1996
 Seattle Public Utilities
 Under water areas derived from aerial photography
 Seattle Information Technology, GIS



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 Seattle Information Technology GIS