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**Creating the Communities of Tomorrow, Today!**

- AutoCAD designs
- Building permits
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- Land development consulting
- Land planning
- Landscape design
- Master-plan communities
- Permit expedition
- Project management
- Public hearings
- Residential permits
- Short plats
- Site-plan design
- Sub-divisions
- Survey services
- TESC Inspections
- Water quality inspections

Visit us online at [www.AbbeyRoadGroup.com](http://www.AbbeyRoadGroup.com)

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION**

Sometimes the paperwork that comes with development can be more confusing than the development process itself. Did you know that most jurisdictions post their codes, parcel information and paperwork on their web sites?

City and county websites are a great resource for information on property that you own or are looking to purchase. Finding background information on property can be beneficial to development as well as purchases or sales. It is also highly important to know the codes that govern the property that you own.

Information available online includes parcel size, zoning maps, overlays, community plans, critical-areas data and more. In addition, detailed code information, development requirements, contact information and other important details are available on many jurisdictional websites, making it easier to get the information you need prior to visiting the permit counter. We have compiled links to many local cities and counties, as well as to other local and state agencies, on our web site. Visit [www.abbeyroadgroup.com/links.asp](http://www.abbeyroadgroup.com/links.asp) for direct links to city, county, school and water district websites along with links to other interesting land-development related sites.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

We hope that you are finding our monthly newsletter to be a great source for land-development information. Watch your mail box for next month's issue of *Developments* which will feature an in-depth article from Gil Hulsmann on determining and managing your project's cash flow. Our next issue will also feature a full look at our newest in-house service, development engineering.

We welcome your input! Please email suggestions for future issues to [abbeyroad@abbeyroadgroup.com](mailto:abbeyroad@abbeyroadgroup.com).

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- 1 The Importance of Planning Civil Engineering
- 2 Impact of Flood Plain Maps Reducing Insurance Rates
- 3 Protecting Rights and Values Abbey Works for You!
- 4 Jurisdictional Information Looking Forward

**CEO'S CORNER: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING**

It has been said that life is a journey, so why do so many people set random goals and hope that their destination will just come to them? Can you imagine one of the world's wealthiest people saying, "I want to build my bank account, so I'll put a dollar in the bank, and wait until I become a billionaire"? Of course not! In every pursuit, the results of specific planning and follow through are obvious. In life, well-laid plans can lead to opportunity. In a business, they can lead to efficiency and, in long-term investment, they can lead to stability.



In land development, everything is based on a plan and the specific actions needed to make the goal become reality. From a project's schedule and budget to the steps needed to get a permit, projects must be well-planned in order to be successful. Deliberate steps ensure that time is not wasted on unproductive processes and allow problems to be mitigated, providing increased productivity and efficiency during the project.

Projects should begin with a careful review of the outcomes and deliverables required starting at the earliest stages of feasibility. By using an outcome-based approach, it is possible to take into account all of the steps needed to complete any task, small or large. Understanding all of these steps and tasks allows the project to be broken down into manageable tasks and scheduled steps. Project planning moves beyond merely scheduling completion dates to scheduling the financial, equipment and human resources need to complete each step.

Taking the time for planning improves project outcomes and provides accountability. Once the project is scheduled, it is up to the project team to get to work on meeting the goals and deadlines to bring the vision to reality.

Resist the urge to move forward without taking the time to plan. The time you spend now will save you time and money over the course of your project! *– Gil Hulsmann*



**CIVIL ENGINEERING**

The Abbey Road Group is pleased to announce the addition of in-house civil engineering to our growing list of services. We are now able to offer affordable and efficient engineering services in conjunction with our land development services.

The addition of this valuable service also brings a new member to the Abbey Road team. Professional Engineer Cara Visintainer joins our team with ten years of diverse project design and management experience in both small and large commercial, residential, municipal and industrial projects.

Cara has worked with multiple jurisdictions and has insight and experience designing and managing complex projects. She also has experience in all aspects of the development process and engineering design. She is skilled in water and sewer design, 3D grading, roadway design and geometrics, stormwater design and modeling, erosion control, site remediation, mining, LID methods, project management and construction support. Contact our office to see how our in-house civil engineering services can benefit your project!

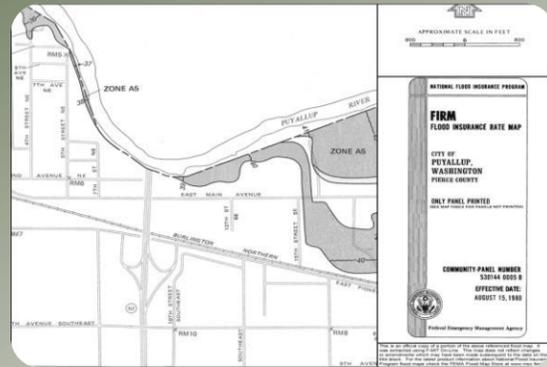


# FLOOD-PLAIN SERVICES

## Flood Plain Maps Impact Insurance Rates & Development Codes

In recent years the Puget Sound area has been inundated with flooding to levels that have not been seen for many decades. In order to protect communities and their citizens, FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) has produced community maps which evaluate the potential for flooding and damage in flood prone areas. These maps are utilized by jurisdictions to create rules about development within flood-prone areas in order to minimize damage to public and private property and minimize the potential for loss of life.

These map ratings are used by the **National Flood Insurance Program** (NFIP) to establish insurance requirements within flood zones. These rates are listed on **Flood Insurance Rate Maps** (or FIRM). The NFIP offers insurance to properties located within **Special Flood Hazard Areas** (SFHA) in order to reduce the strain on local, state and federal agencies in the event of a natural disaster.



Flood Insurance Rate Map

Flood-plain maps are changed and the insurance rates are updated from time to time in order to keep property owners protected. Unfortunately, mapping and updates happen with little input from the property owners and, since these maps are produced on a general scale, they do not address specific properties or parcels. Additionally, since the maps do not specify property characteristics (such as naturally high, graded or filled buildable areas that are above Base Flood Elevation) properties may be inadvertently classified with higher insurance ratings or development restrictions which devalue the property.

Many property owners do not realize how flood-plain mapping affects their property until they are contacted about rising insurance premiums, or when they decide to sell or develop. Property owners are left dealing with two important issues: the high cost of flood insurance and local flood-plain development rules that can negatively affect their property.

## Reducing Insurance Rates

Flood Insurance is an important part of every property owner's risk-mitigation strategy. All property can be insured for losses caused by flooding, but rates are established based on risk. Properties located within SFHAs are required to be insured against flood-related losses. Properties located **outside** of a these areas can be insured at the discretion of the property owner based on general rates.

SFHA premiums for flood insurance are based on multiple criteria. The NFIP's FIRMs base rates on the height of the lowest level of building above the BFE, likeliness to flood, how often they are prone to flood and how quickly they flood, among other factors. As mentioned above, FIRMs are produced on a general scale and do not address specific properties or parcels. Due to the lack of specific information, some properties that are not prone to flooding are included in the flood areas, or may be listed at the wrong rate.

Property owners who believe their property is wrongly classified can attempt to reduce rates by petitioning their insurance provider to lower flood-insurance premiums with an elevation certificate, proving that the site (or at least the buildable area) is above the BFE. This document must be signed by a licensed surveyor, engineer or architect and can be submitted to the insurance provider or lender as evidence that the insured buildings are less likely to be damaged in the event of flooding. The result of this petition may be reduced insurance premiums.

*Please note that reductions of premiums may require reapplication with subsequent insurance renewals, change of carriers, refinancing or sale of the property. Additionally, lending institutions have the right to specifically require flood insurance for any property, whether it is in a flood area or not. Please consult your lender for more information on your loan.*



Homes in flood-prone areas may be engulfed by flood waters when rivers or creeks rise.

## Protecting Future Development and Property Value

Flood-plain development codes have been established to minimize loss of life and damage to property. Communities adopt flood-plain management ordinances and development codes in accordance with the NFIP's requirements for coverage as well as for community safety. An unfortunate side effect of these well-intentioned codes has been restrictions on development. These restrictions can seriously devalue property if it is deemed to be within a SFHA. To protect themselves, property owners need to diligently watch for changes to FEMA flood plain maps and FIRMs so that they can quickly take action when changes affecting their property take place.

If a property has been inadvertently classified within a SFHA, the owner has the right to petition FEMA to officially remove buildings or lots from the flood-plain regulations, and/or insurance requirements, if they can prove that the property's developable area is above the base flood elevation. The process requires the submission of a request to FEMA including an Elevation Certificate for a **Letter of Map Amendment** (LOMA) or a **Letter of Map Revision Based on Fill** (LOMR-F).

The LOMA is a certification from FEMA stating that the property has inadvertently been included in the special flood hazard area. For structures, the certification requires that the lowest ground touching the structure be at or above the BFE. For complete lots, the lowest point on the lot must be at or above the BFE.

The LOMR-F is a certification from FEMA stating that the property has been filled to a level that is above the BFE and is no longer at high risk of flooding. For structures, the certification requires that the lowest ground touching the structure be at or above the BFE. For complete lots, the lowest point on the lot must be at or above the BFE. In all situations for a LOMR-F to be approved, the community must also determine that the land and any existing or proposed structures included in the LOMR-F request are "reasonably safe from flooding."

*Please note that the issuance of a LOMA or LOMR-F does not mean that the property will not flood, rather that the risk of flooding is lower than that of properties located within special flood hazard areas. Additionally, both certifications may require revalidation upon future map changes.*



Properties built above the base flood elevation are protected from most flooding events.

## Abbey Road Works For You!

The Abbey Road Group is committed to helping property owners take control of their investments by keeping them aware of changes that will affect their property. To keep your insurance costs down, we offer the engineering and surveying services required to prepare elevation certificates for use in reducing insurance rates. Our team can additionally prepare the necessary forms and exhibits needed for LOMA or LOMR-F certifications which may exempt your property from strict development codes now and in the future.

We work closely with property owners to give them honest feedback as to their property situation in regard to flood plains and base flood elevations. We have experience in analyzing properties with survey and engineering to correctly identify properties that would benefit from an elevation certificate or a LOMA or LOMR-F certification.

Call us today for a consultation on your property, and let us help you through the flood of regulations to make sure your property is on solid ground!

### Our Flood-Plain Services

- 3D site surveying
- Base flood elevation survey
- Building elevation survey
- Development analysis for current and future projects
- Flood-plain analysis and studies
- Grade analysis for current and future projects
- Jurisdictional coordination of building elevation for zones AO and A
- Preparation and submittal of LOMA requests
- Preparation and submittal of LOMR-F requests
- Preparation of elevations certificates
- Preparation of supporting exhibits
- Review of FEMA/FIRM maps
- Site and building photographs