



DATE: October 21, 2024

TO: Katie Koester, City Manager

THROUGH: Denise Koch, Engineering and Public Works Director  
Nate Rumsey, Engineering and Public Works Deputy Director

FROM: John Bohan, Chief CIP Engineer

SUBJECT: Phase 1 Flood Fighting Neighborhood Outreach Data

After the October 3, 2024 Special Assembly Meeting which covered [Next Steps for Immediate GLOF Mitigation](#), the CBJ Engineering team was tasked with performing property owner outreach and preliminary field investigations along the Mendenhall River to outline the deployment of HESCO Flood Barriers for the first proposed phase of flood fighting. Included in this phase are riverfront properties on the east bank of the Mendenhall River from the north end of Marion Drive, along Riverside Drive, Killewich Drive, Betty Court, Long Run Drive, Meander Way and Rivercourt Way. Engineering staff saturated the neighborhoods with door to door and email outreach and an online preliminary survey to connect with residents between Wednesday, October 9 and Sunday, October 13. The team completed site visits with a total of 70 of the 79 property owners, providing the opportunity to share and gather critical project information. We are continuing outreach to make contact with the remaining homeowners.

The interactions were positive overall, with support expressed for the CBJ's flood fighting efforts. The site visits were informative and provided valuable information to guide future planning and deployment. The main takeaways were separated into two categories – programmatic and technical. Both through written materials provided, and through interactions with Engineering staff, property owners were reminded that their responses to outreach and preliminary field investigation activities were non-bidding and for information gathering purposes only.

Below is a summary of the Programmatic and Technical information gathered:

**Programmatic:**

- The majority of owners are eager to allow barriers on their property to protect their own and others' properties.
- Some owners will allow barriers on their property to protect other properties (they don't feel their property needs protection, but don't want to be the property owner who said no.)
- Some owners will participate, but do not want the barriers to impact their usable property or view. For example, they have conditioned their support of the project on barrier height restrictions, desire removable barrier for access to the riverbank, and / or stated they were unwilling to relocate property items to accommodate barrier installations.
- A small number of owners did not want to allow barriers on their property.
- A significant majority of property owners said they would expect CBJ to relocate necessary items, pay for the cost of relocation and restoration of their property when the barriers are removed.
- Many owners expressed they are physically unable to relocate items that would impact the installation of the barriers and maintenance path.

- Some owners expressed they do not want barriers to be permanent (they had a varying idea of term for “permanent”) and also asked how long they would be in place.
- Some property owners expressed an expectation of compensation or reduced property taxes for impacted property for barriers and access.
- Some property owners expressed concerns about the impacts on their property value and future ability to sell.
- Some property owners expressed the desire to implement a long-term solution as opposed to the “flood fighting” short term solution.
- Most property owners said they want more and better information flow for short term and long term flood fighting process and to be better informed about the options and decision making process.
- Homeowners questioned whether recent flood events change the FEMA flood zone designation of my property? It wasn’t in a designated flood zone before the last 2 record floods.

**Technical:**

- Many properties appear to need bank armoring to protect the integrity of the HESCO Barrier levees.
  - o Many banks appear to have older armoring that was likely designed to accommodate a lower maximum flood elevation leaving the upper bank exposed to the new higher flood levels.
  - o Some armored banks appear to possibly be in various stages of being destabilized by changes in the river. The armoring looks stable, but is showing signs of sliding into the river or has been displaced by the high flows which could be cause for concerns.
  - o Other properties have no apparent bank armoring or the armoring was covered by sediment deposits and unable to see the armoring.
  - o The armoring on many properties requires additional investigation to determine the competency to withstand higher flooding elevations that would overtop the riverbank. The stability analysis is to help protect HESCO Barrier Levee from being compromised by riverbank erosion.
- 13 properties had unencumbered riverfront yard space that would allow the barriers and maintenance access to be easily installed.
- 40 properties had minor obstructions (movable gardens, sheds, simple decks) that could be relocated to create reasonable yard space for the barriers and smaller than ideal maintenance access.
- 16 properties had significant obstructions that would be difficult and costly to move, require detachment from the house, or the physical location of the house would impact this construction of barriers and access. Barriers may be installed and filled by hand in many locations, but equipment access could be limited and not be possible once barriers are in place.
- 3 properties lack space along the river side of their buildings to allow for barrier installation and may require construction of wider riverbank (into the river) to allow barrier installation

**Homeowner Questions and Concerns:**

- What happens if there isn’t 20’ between my house and the riverbank?
- Can you raise the rock armored bank while you are installing the HESCO Barriers?
- Many grade changes and undulations occur in the yards and between neighboring properties – how will this impact my property if you have to connect to my neighbors uneven property?
- What happens with the drainage from the properties through the water impenetrable barriers?
- What happens to my buried drain pipes that flow out to the riverbank when the river level increases above the bank level and is contained by the barriers? It seems these pipes will let water back into my property.
- Beware – my riverbank, behind the armoring, consists of soft, sandy silty ground that liquefies and becomes unstable when wet and it wouldn’t have the capacity to hold the flood barriers.
  - o I had small sinkholes in my yard after the last 2 floods.

- My neighbor's unarmored banks have continued to degrade after the past 2 years of record flood events.
- Look at installing barriers further upstream than Marion Drive, the straightening of the river above Marion Drive has focused the flow on the upper Marion property, potentially creating a similar (but smaller scale) scenario to Killewich Drive near riverside (flow over bank at the 90 degree bend).
- If my second story deck and outside stairway needs to be removed for barrier installation, how do i provide a fire escape for my second story?
- How will municipal sewage backups into peoples' homes be prevented when pump stations are taken off line due to electrical grid shut downs?
- How will the HESCO barriers withstand the turbulent river water and large logs and trees that jump out of the river and have hit homes?
- What does "hardened" access / work path mean?