



CITY OF SUMAS

433 Cherry Street/PO Box 9, Sumas, WA 98295

P: (360) 988-5711 F: (360) 988-8855

WHATCOM COUNTY NATURAL HAZARDS MITIGATION PLAN

CITY OF SUMAS

PROGRESS REPORT 2024

In September 2021, the County of Whatcom released an update to its Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP). This plan reviews the County's response to any potential natural hazard which could occur. This plan is coordinated with the seven cities who reside within the County.

Below is the City of Sumas' 2024 progress report for specific mitigation actions listed in the Sumas portion of the plan, related to flooding. The first list is ongoing actions with no completion date. These actions the City will continue to perform indefinitely as part of our role in flood mitigation for our community. The second list is temporary actions with clear completion criteria and timelines. This list will be updated as action items are completed or canceled, and new projects are added.

Ongoing Mitigation Actions

FL-a. Incorporate Flood Mitigation into Local Planning. The City Planning Department continues to incorporate flood mitigation into local planning, including as part of the 2016 update of the city critical areas ordinance, the 2019 adoption of new FEMA flood insurance rate maps, and updates to the County comprehensive flood hazard management plan currently underway.

The City Planning Department is in the process of updating our Comprehensive Plan which is due for completion in December 2025. Since this update will be the first following Sumas' devastating flood event in November 2021, more resources have been directed towards coming up with comprehensive planning solutions to mitigate flood damage. The Washington State Legislature also passed House Bill 1181, requiring the addition of climate impacts and climate change to the local comprehensive planning process.

FL-b. Form Partnerships to Support Floodplain Management. The City Planning and Public Works Department continue to work to form partnerships that support floodplain management, including working closely with County long-range and current planning divisions and the County Public Works River and Flood Division.

The City Planning and Public Works Departments have regular and often meetings with officials from the County Public Works River and Flood Division on how best to manage the floodplain on a regional level. The City Planning Department also participates in a countywide comprehensive planning process in conjunction with the County Planning and Development Services to develop a flood-resilient plan for future city growth.

FL-c. Limit or Restrict Development in Floodplain Areas. The City Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments continue to limit development in floodplain areas through amendment and enforcement of City critical areas ordinance regulations, flood damage prevention regulations, and city building codes.

The City Planning and Building Departments continue to advise prospective developers and home builders about any issues related to critical areas, flood damage prevention, and city code that may impact a sites ability to be developed.

FL-d. Improve Stormwater Management Planning. The City Planning Department continues to improve planning, regulation, and enforcement related to stormwater management, including through 2016 updates to the City comprehensive plan and the 2016 adoption of the state stormwater management manual for Western Washington.

The City Planning and Public Works Department have been working on a project to map out the City's stormwater management facilities to keep track of all maintenance activities and issues that may arise.

FL-e. Improve Flood Risk Assessment. The City Public Works Department continue to assess risks related to flooding, including through participation in the federal CRS Program and RISK Map assessment efforts.

The City has been participating in FEMA's project of updating flood risk mapping for the entire Nooksack River watershed. Special attention has been directed towards Sumas based on the disproportionate amount of damage that the town received.

FL-f. Join or Improve Compliance with NFIP. The City continues to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The City Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments continue to work to improve compliance with the NFIP, including through adoption of 2019 amendments to the City's flood damage prevention ordinance that included updated flood insurance rate maps.

The City participated in a cycle update to our CRS rating. Although the City did not increase in rating, the City did receive more points for improved compliance and for extra measures that the City enforces. The new point amount puts Sumas in good standing for advancement to the next rating in time for the next cycle update.

FL-g. Manage the Floodplain Beyond Minimum Requirements. The City Planning and Building Departments continue to manage floodplains beyond minimum requirements, including through amendment of critical areas and floodplain management regulations that require extra elevation of critical facilities and prohibit the placement of fill within floodplains except under certain conditions.

The City recently amended its flood damage prevention ordinance to add an extra foot of freeboard to all new construction. Prior to the amendment, the City required one foot of freeboard to all new construction. Now, the City requirement is two feet of freeboard.

FL-h. Establish Local Funding Mechanisms for Flood Mitigation. The County Flood Control Zone District continue to make locally generated district funds available for local projects, including the buyout of property in high hazard areas.

The City has been participating with the local County Flood Control Zone District and Whatcom County as part of a buy-out program with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through a Community Development Block Grant focused on disaster recovery after the November 2021 flood event. One home in Sumas was bought out through this program.

FL-i. Improve Stormwater Drainage System Capacity. The City Public Works Department continues to work to improve stormwater drainage systems capacity through annual system upgrades and maintenance projects.

As part of FEMA's disaster recovery effort following the November 2021 flood event, the City has been working to improve various stormwater drainage facilities around Sumas to better handle stormwater flows during a flood event.

FL-j. Conduct Regular Maintenance for Drainage Systems and Flood Control Structures. The City Public Works Department continue to work to improve stormwater drainage system capacity through annual maintenance projects, such as inspection and clearing of stormwater conveyance systems.

An annual drainage system inspection was performed by a member of the City Public Works Department. A copy of the resulting inspection report will be provided as part of the materials for Activity 540.

FL-k. Preserve Floodplains as Open Space. The City Planning Department continues to work to preserve floodplains as open space, including through the recording of restrictive covenants required in conjunction with approved subdivisions.

The City is participating in a buy-out program with Whatcom County as part of a Community Development Block Grant with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development focused on disaster recovery following the November 2021 flood event. One property was acquired as part of the program and a covenant will be placed on the property, preserving it as open space.

Temporary Mitigation Actions

FL-1. Protect City Hall/Police Station. This building is subject to flooding and is also prone to major damage in an earthquake, given that the building pre-dates modern building codes. A new facility should be constructed outside the floodplain.

Due to financial constraints, the project to relocate the Sumas City Hall/Police Station has been cancelled indefinitely and should be removed from the NHMP Mitigation Action items.

FL-2. Protect the Fire Station. This building is subject to flooding. A new facility should be constructed outside the floodplain.

Due to financial constraints, the project to relocate the Fire Station has been cancelled indefinitely and should be removed from the NHMP Mitigation Action items.

FL-3. Flood Corridor Residential Buy-Out. In a large flood, the Cherry Street bridge over Johnson Creek is a major impediment to flow. Water is forced out of the Johnson Creek channel, leading to worse inundation in the commercial and residential areas to the north and northeast. The bridge should be replaced at a higher elevation and with less supporting pilings. **(This description was not written incorrectly. This is the description given for the project in the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan)**

The City is participating in a buy-out and elevation program with Whatcom County who is working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on a Community Development Block Grant, focused on disaster recovery following the November 2021 flood event. There is one home along the Johnson Creek channel that was acquired by Whatcom County. The City of Sumas also has over a dozen homes on a list to be elevated via this grant program.

FL-4. Cherry Street Bridge Replacement. In a large flood, the Cherry Street bridge over Johnson Creek is a major impediment to flow. Water is forced out of the Johnson Creek channel, leading to worse inundation in the commercial and residential areas to the north and northeast. The bridge should be replaced at a higher elevation and with less supporting pilings.

Replacing the Cherry Street Bridge is still a high-priority project for the City. However, the road which the bridge services is State Route 9 (also known as SR 9 or Cherry Street). The road being designated a State Route means that any maintenance or construction projects pertaining to Cherry Street must be performed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Due to the State's project review requirements, the planning and engineering phase may take years to complete. Also, in order for the project to happen, the bridge must be a high priority for replacement from the State's perspective; of which it is not.

Recommendation for new mitigation action items to be added.

Hovel Road Culvert Replacement. In the November 2021 flood event, Bone Creek began to overflow as a culvert under Hovel Road had become blocked by debris. The overflow was threatening to flood a nearby neighborhood. In the interest of protecting the neighborhood, and with no time to spend clearing the debris, City crew were forced to tear out the culvert to allow the water to continue downstream and out of Sumas. Shortly after the flood event, a new temporary culvert was put in place to allow Hovel Road to be reconnected, albeit with only one lane. Three

years later, the temporary culvert is still in place, not at all large enough to handle flood waters if a new event were to occur. The City is currently working with engineers to design a bridge to go over Bone Creek that would provide ample capacity for flood waters in potential future events and fully reconnect Hovel Road. The project is being funded by FEMA as part of our disaster recovery projects.