

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: Program for Public Information (PPI) document relating to the City's Community Rating System (CRS) program

REPORT: 1592-07

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

Before the Commission is a resolution on the revised Program for Public Information (PPI) document, which is a required element of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s Community Rating System (CRS) program. In May of this year City Plan Staff worked with FEMA to review and verify the City's participation in the CRS over the past 5 years and recertify the City's commitment for another year. Part of this process included revision of the City's PPI and PPI Committee. The adoption of this PPI and its revised committee members indicates the City's commitment to provide a coordinated approach on flood hazard outreach and education.

The City of New Haven is a member of FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which enables property owners in flood prone areas of the city to purchase flood insurance if they comply with minimum standards for floodplain management and mitigation. In 1990, NFIP implemented a voluntary incentive program called the CRS program, to recognize and encourage community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. In 2013, this program was revised and PPI was introduced as an element for Activity 330 (Outreach Projects). This PPI is intended to provide a framework for a coordinated approach on flood hazard outreach and education within the city.

Beginning in July 2014, the City submitted a letter of interest to FEMA to enter the CRS program and subsequently entered the program and adopted the initial PPI in June of 2016 by an act of the City Plan Commission. Recently, FEMA's technical review committee reviewed the city's revised PPI document and offered their feedback. The document before the Commission was revised accordingly and is now submitted for adoption.

The Commission's adoption of this document is required in order to maintain our status in the CRS program and get appropriately rated. In addition to demonstrating the City's commitment to floodplain protection and flood hazard preparedness, response, and recovery, the CRS rating would allow property owners in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) of the city to avail a discount on their flood insurance.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The goals of PPI are: to develop and sustain a long-term public outreach program that increases general awareness on flood hazards and preparedness and to reduce flood risk by providing the public with effective tools and information that can be used before, during, and after a flood. Based on the CRS Manual criteria, the City of New Haven has identified the City Plan Commission as the entity to serve as the PPI Committee, with representatives from the three departments (City Plan, Engineering, and Building) that share floodplain management responsibilities and one department (Emergency Management) that is concerned with safety of residents living in zones of flood risk. Given below is a list of proposed PPI Committee members and their affiliation:

Individual	Affiliation
<i>Aicha Woods</i>	Executive Director, City Plan Department
<i>Jaime Stein</i>	Planner, City Plan Department
Rick Fontana	Emergency Management Director
Dawn Henning	Assistant City Engineer, Engineering Department
Giovanni Zinn	City Engineer, Engineering Department
Jim Turcio	Building Official
Ernest Pagan	City Plan Commission
Adam Marchand	City Plan Commission
Edward Mattison	City Plan Commission
Leslie Radcliff	City Plan Commission
Edwin Martinez	City Plan Commission
Carl Goldfield	City Plan Commission

The primary role of the PPI Committee is to assess the overall needs of the community with respect to flooding and develop strategies for conveying this information to the community through a comprehensive outreach plan. The committee members will assist in implementing the PPI plan by providing suggestions on areas of the City that should be targeted for outreach. The Committee will also determine what type of message should be conveyed and how often to distribute the materials. This PPI will become effective upon adoption by the City Plan Commission.

Following adoption, the PPI Committee will maintain a standing agenda item on the City Plan Commission's monthly agenda. During some months, there may not be any discussion associated with the PPI agenda item. During some months, only some PPI matters will be addressed. However, at a minimum, the committee will comprehensively discuss the PPI actions, outcomes, and the overall PPI document at least once per year in September or October. During this meeting, the PPI Committee will prepare the annual PPI evaluation report to be submitted to the Board of Alders for its consideration.

The City Plan Department will be the primary office responsible for public information logistics with assistance from the Office of Emergency Management. The Engineering Department and Building Department will contribute to public information message content, but will not be responsible for distributing public information. This arrangement will benefit from the close relationship between the PPI Committee and the City Plan Department, and avoid involving Engineering and Building Department administrative staff in the distribution of public information.

It is important to note that the City of New Haven maintains other offices and departments that periodically have the need to develop and distribute public information. These offices will continue to issue public information as needed, unrelated to this PPI.

The PPI has been developed to target all residents within the City of New Haven. However, more detailed information will be developed and distributed as noted below:

- All New Haven Residents – Basic information will be developed and distributed to all residents within the City of New Haven with respect to flooding, as flooding can occur anywhere.
- Repetitive Loss Areas and Residents within the Floodplain – Many of these areas are within FEMA designated flood zones and specific outreach material will be developed for these areas. There are 43 repetitive loss properties within the City of New Haven. These repeat claims demonstrate the serious nature of flood hazards and the need for greater flood protection measures.

- Builders, Contractors, Engineers and Architects – It is important to ensure that these entities have a strong understanding of the permitting requirements, flood protection measures, and applicable mitigation grants.
- Real Estate Agents and Mortgage and Insurance Companies – Information will be provided that will allow agents and companies to notify potential homebuyers within special flood hazard areas of the flood hazard risk and flood insurance requirements.
- Spanish speakers: Committee members have expressed concerns that Spanish speakers appear to be less aware of flood insurance and flood preparedness because most of the existing explanatory materials are in English.

Sections 4 and 5 of the enclosed PPI document (Pages 14-23), outline the various public information efforts that the City would undertake and the priority messages that would be delivered in these messages as part of flood hazard education and outreach.

ADVICE

The Commission finds the PPI document in the best interest of the City and recommends approval.

ADOPTED: September 22, 2021
Leslie Radcliffe
Chair

ATTEST: 
Aicha Woods
Executive Director, City Plan Department