

# NOTICE FROM THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

The City of Freeport, Illinois, in conjunction with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), has applied for funding through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant to acquire and demolish flood prone properties in the floodway of the Pecatonica River in the Eastside community. FEMA is currently reviewing the project application and estimates award by the spring of 2021. The actual award date depends on several factors, some of which are beyond FEMA's control.

**What is the purpose of this circular?** This circular is provided by FEMA to share with the community information about the FEMA grant and the acquisition process. FEMA is also requesting feedback, including any concerns that may exist about the grant program or acquisition process. FEMA will seek to address concerns to help community members make informed decisions about whether to participate in the project. This outreach is part of FEMA's project review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal environmental laws and executive orders such as EO 12898 and EO 11988. IEMA and the City of Freeport completed their environmental review and cleared the project with multiple state agencies.

## TELEPHONE TOWN HALL MEETING

FEMA will host a telephone town hall meeting to explain the information in this circular. Due to the current pandemic, an in-person meeting would put the health of the community at risk. All community members and other interested persons are encouraged to participate.

**Wednesday 9th December 2020 | 4:00 pm | 888-410-3427 (English) | 844-881-1317 (Spanish)**

**¿Hablas español? Para una versión de este aviso en español, por favor comuníquese con la Iglesia Hopar Adonai (732 East Orin St., 815-821-9912) o con la Ciudad de Freeport (314 W Stephenson St., 815-235-8221).**

## About the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant

- The City of Freeport applied to FEMA for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant for acquisition and demolition of approximately 150 flood prone properties in Eastside.
- An acquisition/demolition project entails the purchase of land and structure, demolition of the structure, removal of utilities, and deed restriction of the land as green space for perpetuity.
- The site cannot be redeveloped but certain open space uses that are beneficial to the floodplain and the community in general may be permitted. FEMA allows for the land to be used for community recreation purposes such as a park, should the City be interested.

- This grant program is **completely voluntary** for property owners. Qualifying property owners received a Notice of Voluntary Interest form where they indicated their willingness to participate.
- Whether or not you submitted the Notice of Voluntary Interest form, **all residents and interested parties are encouraged to comment on this project.**
- Neither the State of Illinois nor the City of Freeport will use its eminent domain authority to purchase the property for open-space purposes from those who choose not to participate.
- The City expects to complete the project in three phases. The first focus will be on occupied homes, then unoccupied structures, then vacant lots.
- The project would have to be completed within 3 years of the grant being awarded.
- For Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants, federal funds pay 75 percent of the project cost. The City of Freeport will fund the remaining 25 percent.
- Property for the project will be acquired only from willing property owners who have volunteered to participate.
- All necessary permits will be obtained prior to implementation of the project.

### Participation for Property Owners is Completely Voluntary

- As part of the City of Freeport's application to FEMA, persons filled out the Notice of Voluntary Interest form. Only those whose form was included in the City's application to FEMA may participate in the grant program.
- If you put your name and information on the Notice of Voluntary Interest form indicating that you were not interested in the program, you can still participate if you change your mind before FEMA awards the grant. **If you submitted the Notice of Voluntary Interest form and change your mind, please let the City of Freeport know immediately.**
- If you submitted a Notice of Voluntary Interest form and indicated you were interested, that does not mean you are required to participate. When you receive an offer for your property, **you can choose whether you want to accept it.**
- Once the City informs the property owner in writing of the offer, the property owner will have the opportunity to sign a Statement of Voluntary Participation to confirm the intent to participate or to decline the offer.

### The Purchase Offer

- For each property identified for acquisition, the City of Freeport will establish and document a property value based on market value. Put simply, the market value is the price a property would reasonably sell for in a reasonable timeframe on the open competitive market.
- If the purchase offer for a property is less than the amount the property owner must pay to purchase a comparable home in the same community, a supplemental payment of up to \$31,000 may be applied to the difference.

- The **final mitigation offer** to a property owner is based on the value assigned to a property (the purchase offer) and applicable additions and deductions.
- Deductions to the purchase offer may include Duplication of Benefits deductions such as:
  - If the property owner received assistance such as insurance, loans, repair grants, compensation in compliance with a court order, or other such assistance and cannot document that it has been used for its intended purpose.
  - If there are legal claims or legal obligations that arise in connection to the property that may provide a benefit to the property owner.
- Each property owner will receive in writing the market value determined for their property and the method used to determine the final mitigation offer.
- Property owners with disputes on the amount of the final mitigation offer may appeal by providing documentation to support their argument. They must hire a qualified appraiser at their cost and submit the appraisal to the City, who will send to IEMA for a decision.
- The City of Freeport must ensure that all property owners are treated fairly and are offered an equitable package of benefits.

### Information for Renters/Tenants

- The decision to participate is made by the owner of a property.
- Residential and business tenants may need to involuntarily relocate as a result of the acquisition of their housing or business space.
- Eligible displaced tenants are entitled to assistance as required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.). Assistance includes:
  - Reasonable out-of-pocket (or fixed schedule) moving expenses
  - In certain circumstances, compensation for a limited time for reasonable increase in rent and utility costs incurred in connection with the relocation
- Tenants choosing to purchase a replacement dwelling may apply the rental assistance toward the down payment.
- Deductions may be made if relocated tenants received relocation assistance or rental assistance previously for the same purpose as part of disaster assistance from any source.

For more information, read the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Guidance Addendum [www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fy15\\_hma\\_addendum.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fy15_hma_addendum.pdf)

## Public Participation

FEMA strongly encourages public participation during FEMA's review of this project. FEMA will provide updates on the City of Freeport's website <https://cityoffreeport.org/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-status-and-other-flood-faqs/> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/FreeportCityHall/>.

FEMA will host a telephone town hall meeting on **Wednesday 9th December 2020 at 4:00 pm** to provide information and solicit feedback on the proposed project. Register early for the meeting at <https://tthm.wufoo.com/forms/freeport-flood-mitigation-project-town-hall/>.

You may also call **888-410-3427** (English) or **844-881-1317** (Spanish) to join the meeting directly. In addition, interested parties may provide comments to:

### **Duane Castaldi**

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### **Sam AL-Basha**

State Hazard Mitigation Officer

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### **Kirstin Hinds**

Community & Economic Development Director/Assistant to the City Manager

#### **City of Freeport**

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Phone: (815) 235-8221

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Please provide feedback by Friday 8th January 2021. FEMA will provide a summary of feedback and the decision on agency action through a Public Notice that will be published in the local newspaper, FEMA website, City website, and City Facebook page.