

FINAL PUBLIC NOTICE
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Acquisition and Demolition Project in Freeport, Illinois

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is proposing to fund the City of Freeport (City), Illinois, in conjunction with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) for acquisition and demolition of flood prone properties in Freeport Census Tract 7, located in the floodway of the Pecatonica River in the City. The community is known as Eastside. The City has applied for funding through the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM) as authorized by Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. The City plans to apply for funding through other FEMA programs for acquisition and demolition of additional flood prone properties in the same community. This notice covers all sources of FEMA funding for this project.

Property owners' participation in FEMA funded acquisition and demolition projects is voluntary. FEMA makes the acquisition and demolition of flood prone structures, particularly those in mapped, special flood hazard areas, priority mitigation projects. Acquisition and demolition projects include the purchase of land and structures, demolition of the structures, removal of utilities, and deed restriction of the land as green space in perpetuity. Restricting the land to green space allows the natural floodplain functions to return. The properties purchased with grant funds cannot be redeveloped, but certain open space uses that are beneficial to the floodplain and the community in general may be permitted, such as a park or wetland. FEMA considers this type of mitigation to be 100 percent effective against future property damage.

FEMA has reviewed the project pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and FEMA's implementing Instruction. FEMA has also reviewed the project for compliance with Executive Order (EO) 12898, Environmental Justice for Low Income and Minority Populations, which requires public engagement and review of federal actions that may have the potential to disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations.

FEMA, IEMA, and the City developed a public engagement strategy that centered around a Telephone Town Hall meeting to engage and inform the residents and property owners in the Eastside community about the project. The public meeting was not held in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA mailed information about the project and the upcoming Telephone Town Hall meeting to the community in November 2020. FEMA also promoted the public meeting in the local newspaper, on social media, and on the City's and FEMA's websites. The Telephone Town Hall, held December 9, 2020, provided an opportunity for the community to learn about the project, ask questions, and provide comments. FEMA invited additional comments for 30 days after the meeting. Twenty-one persons provided comments and questions during and after the meeting. Based on the questions and comments received, FEMA prepared a Frequently Asked Questions circular that was mailed to the community in February 2021.

FEMA also consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. On February 24, 2021, the SHPO concurred with FEMA's determination that no historic properties would be affected by the project.

Based on a review of the scope, consideration of the public comments received, SHPO concurrence, and pursuant to 1) FEMA's Instruction 108-1-1 Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Responsibilities and Program Requirements; 2) Executive Orders (EOs) addressing floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990), and environmental justice (EO 12898); and 3) the DHS's Instruction Manual 023-1-1, FEMA determined that the proposed project would not have a disproportionately high and adverse impact on minority and low-income populations and would not significantly adversely affect the quality of the natural and human environment. Due to a lack of extraordinary circumstances, the project was determined eligible for a categorical exclusion (CATEX) from further NEPA review. As a result, FEMA has determined the project may proceed. Additional information on the decision or decision-making process may be obtained by emailing Duane.Castaldi@fema.dhs.gov or writing to: Duane Castaldi, Regional Environmental Officer, FEMA Region V, Department of Homeland Security, 536 South Clark Street, 6th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60605.