

JUL 17 1981

Mr Ronald Maynock  
City Building Official  
P.O. Box 809  
Mt. Vernon, Washington 98273

Dear Mr. Maynock:

This letter will confirm my telephone answers to questions posed in your June 19 letters. The City is not presently obligated to adopt a floodway as part of the process of converting to the regular flood insurance program. However, for your general information, if a floodway is designated in the future and the dikes are included in that zone, you would be able to maintain and repair the dikes to their present profile elevations. Raising the dikes is another matter. Hydraulic studies of the river have shown that increasing the height of the dikes would cause an increase in flood levels upstream. On that basis, your ordinance would have to prohibit such improvements.

A "density" floodway is a different concept from our present practice of establishing two separate zones in the flood plain. In the density concept, the entire flood plain is placed under the same set of development restrictions that are designed to limit future increases in flood depth. In the two-zone concept, the floodway is kept in its present degree of development while the flood fringe is allowed to develop pretty much at the will of the local community. The exception being that flood-fringe development must be floodproofed.

We are not sure that a density floodway is appropriate for the Skagit River because of the anticipated depths and velocities of flood water. We have commissioned a study nationally to have criteria established for the use of this concept and to develop a method of determining permissible density of development. At the present, only preliminary results have been made available, but they raise doubts regarding applicability to the Skagit.

Richland, Washington has adopted a density floodway along the Yakima River. Their action is at least partly responsible for our study described above. At this time I would not describe their effort as completely successful in that we have not yet approved their ordinance.

I hope this satisfactorily answers your questions.

Sincerely,

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Wes Edens  
Director of Engineering  
Insurance & Mitigation Division

cc: OF/IM MR Natl DRF  
IM/Edens/ts/7/16/81