

**COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION**

PUBLIC NOTICE

This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD funds

07/02/2021

Final Notice and Public Explanation of a Proposed Activity in a 100-Year Flood Plain

This is to give notice that the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC), as the Responsible Entity under Part 58, has conducted an evaluation as required by Executive Order 11988, in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 Subpart C -Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Wetlands Protection, to determine the potential effect that its activity in the floodplain will have on the human environment for the Road Improvement Project on Route 33, Beach Road, Saipan. The activity is funded through the Community Development Block Grant –Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program grant number B-19-DV-69-0001 & B-19-DV-69-0002.

The proposed activity consist of regrading and resurfacing of the existing road and repair of existing surface drainage appurtenances such as curb/gutter and swales will streamline flow and migration of runoff properly. The improvement will ensure road safety and enhance floodplain development by ensuring no potential standing water is retained and that the rate of runoff discharge to seawater is minimized and dispersed. This activity is also National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) compliant.

The public may view the information and provide comments regarding the proposed activity by visiting the NMHC website at www.nmhc.gov.net by clicking on the public notice/announcement tab and selecting the Environmental Review Records or you may visit the NMHC CDBG-DR website at <https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com>.

The NMHC has reevaluated the alternatives of the road improvement project on Route 33, Beach Road Saipan, and has determined that it has no practicable alternative. Environmental files that document compliance with steps 3 through 6 of Executive Order 11988, are available for public inspection and review online at <https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com> or <https://www.nmhc.gov.net>. You may also visit our office located in Garapan, Saipan.

The NMHC has published online the 8-step decision making process for projects in the floodplain. The public may access and review the determination of no significant impact for the road improvement project on Route 33, Beach Road, Saipan at <https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com> or <https://www.nmhc.gov.net> or you may visit our office located in Garapan, Saipan.

Written comments shall be submitted on or before July 12, 2021, no later than 4:00 p.m. Comments may be submitted from the following submission methods: email at nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp; or facsimile to (670)234-9021; or hand deliver to the NMHC Central Office located in Garapan, Saipan. Attention: CDBG-DR Project Team.

/s/

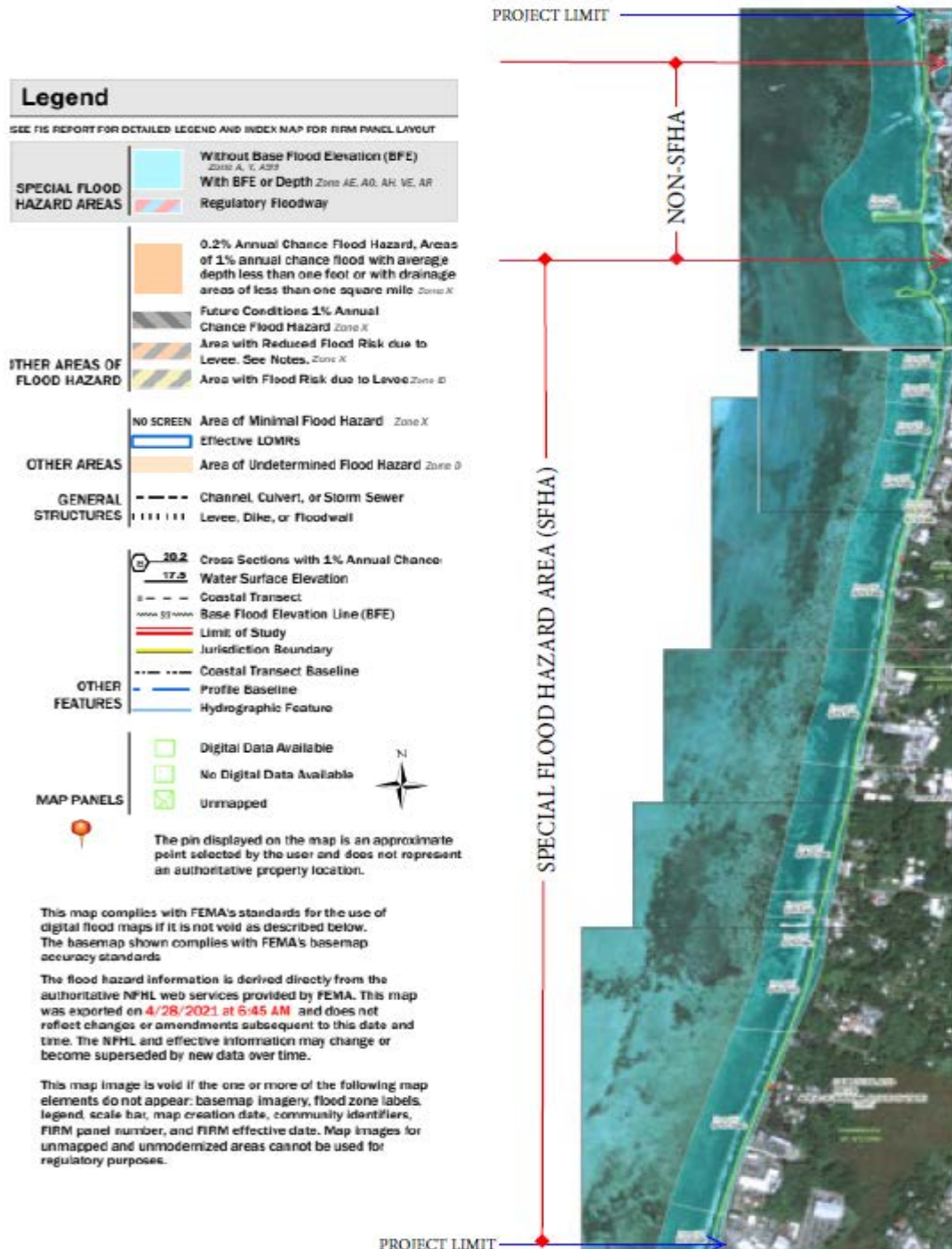
Ralph DLG. Torres, Governor, CNMI

NMHC/CDBG-DR 8-Step decision Making Process for Projects in the Floodplain

Project Name: Beach Road Improvement

1. Determine whether the action is located in a 100-year floodplain (or a 500-year floodplain for critical actions).

This is not a critical facility/structure. Section of the proposed project is in a 100-year flood zone (Special Flood Hazard Area – SFHA). The flood zone designation is VE (Coastal areas associated with storm waves) with a Base Flood Elevation (BFE) of 10 ft. See map below.



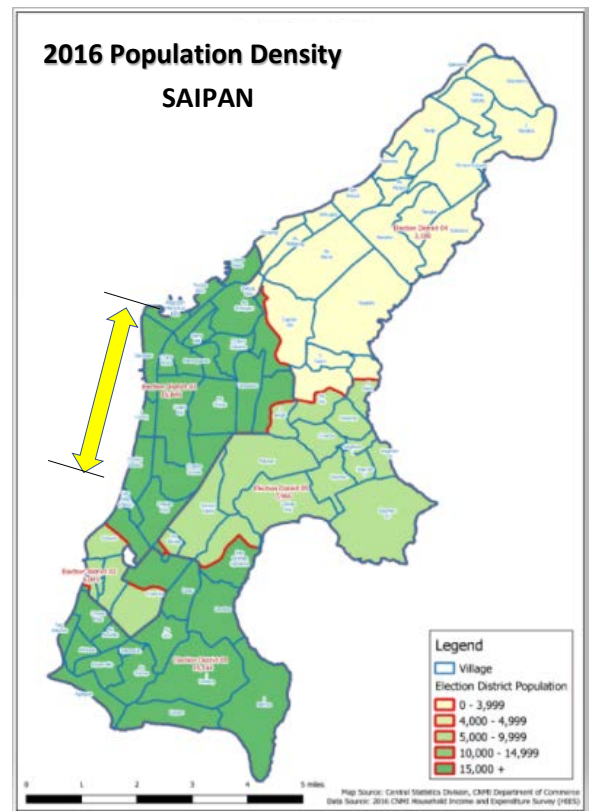
2. Notify the public for early review of the proposal and involve the affected and interested public in the decision-making process.

DPW has submitted its proposal to DCRM for review. As part of the review process, DCRM will notify the public and conduct a public hearing for all to voice their concern(s). Additionally, and in compliance with funding requirements, DPW/NMHC will avail the public for comments. As such, the public will have two opportunities to voice their concerns.

On May 12, 2021, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) had published Early Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a 100-Year Floodplain through its website (www.nmhcgov.net & www.cnmi-cdbqdr.com) and the local newspapers. On May 27, 2021, the comment period ended and had received no public comments regarding the proposed activity in the floodplain.

3. Identify and evaluate practicable alternatives. Identify the project site selection criteria and consider several alternative sites and actions:

Beach Road (Route 33) stretches along the coastal west side of the island of Saipan between the village of San Antonio and the commercial tourist district of Garapan. It serves some of the most densely populated areas in the island. Its service has spanned longer than any other major roadways in the island. Built by the Japanese and used during the final year of WWII by the US Military, it was a vital logistical infrastructure, connecting the Isley Military Airfield in the south and US Navy Tanapag Harbor in the north after the war. Over the years, Beach Road has become a vital thoroughfare connecting the island communities. Its crucial importance continues as it enhances social and economic growth of the community by providing stable regularities in social life and interactions in the areas of employment, access to goods and services, transport and access to the beach and other water related activities.



Relocating the road will have adverse and costly social and economic consequences. As seen on the map, hundreds of families will lose access and the ability to work, go to school, and avail social services. Utility and communication services to homes and businesses will deteriorate due to lack of access for repairs. Degeneration of emergency and public safety responses will continue. Businesses will cease due to substantial reduction and costly complications to transport and trade. One needs no cost-benefit analysis to see that relocating the road will result in an immediate and extreme social and economic consequence on the residents and businesses along this road. Because of the island’s small size, the trickle-down effect and iterative proliferation nature of this hardship will be universal and immediate as well. Finally, road relocation will directly and indirectly force thousands of people and businesses to uproot from their lands and properties and relocate elsewhere. The mitigation cost will easily be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

A. Locate the project within the floodplain

The project limit begins at Lat. 15.170823°N, long. 145.710655°E and ends at 15.214939°N, Long. 145.720624°. It is located on the island of Saipan. See map on the previous page.

B. Consider modifying the project

One practical option is to elevate the road with compacted fill. However, the National Flood Insurance Program prohibits any structural fill in VE and coastal A zones.

C. Obtain a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) or Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) – DPW will conduct an elevation survey and compare the data to the current base flood elevations. The results will determine whether or not a LOMA or LOMR is applicable.

4. Identify Potential Direct and Indirect Impacts of Associated with Floodplain Development.

All road construction involves earthmoving that may result in changes to elevation and landscape. This project ensures that no alterations will be done to reduce flood storage capacity that may create water displacement, resulting in flooding elsewhere. The project site however, is in a coastal VE zone and potential flooding would be from eastward storm-induced velocity wave action. Because this road is perpendicular to wave action (transverse encroachment), it does not pose significant impact to the floodplain. This road also acts as a barrier between homes and people on the east side. Adverse impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values are minimal. In fact, it may be beneficial in that it diverts runoff to existing discharge outfalls, thus reducing uncontrolled contamination to the lagoon ecosystem and provides safe access to outdoor recreation. Finally, as this road is in a special flood hazard area, there is still that one percent change of inundation that will equal or greater than the 10-foot base flood elevation. Fortunately, the road has an average elevation of about 9 feet with a lowest and highest points at 6 and 12 feet respectively.

5. Where practicable, design or modify the proposed action to minimize the potential adverse impacts to lives, property, and natural values within the floodplain and to restore, and preserve the values of the floodplain.

Sixty percent of the proposed project is in flood zone VE. About thirty percent is in zone AE and the rest is non-SFHA. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides no requirements on road construction; only on building structures and appurtenances. For example, 44 CFR 60.3(e)(4) provides for new construction and substantial improvements for building structures. Additionally, NFIP 60.3(e)(6) prohibits any structural fill in V zones. These requirements are more stringent than those in other flood zones. Furthermore, NFIP prohibits any structural fill in a VE or coastal A zones.

Like many roads with similar design composition, the level of drivability and road safety is dictated by road conditions. Current conditions of pocket-settlement and upheavals, rutting and cracking, potholes and patch failures have forced motorists to drive into bike/pedestrian lanes to avoid these hazards.

The project proposes to resurface the existing road to correct these issues. With this improvement, road hazards are greatly reduced. Road profile will also be improved, thus improving drainage while minimizing physical alterations within the floodplain.

6. Re-evaluate the Alternatives.

With no clear but restrictive NFIP requirements for road construction, the road can still be floodproofed as follows but will cost significantly more and with no comparatively real and substantial effects to preserve values of the floodplain, in fact it may have adverse impact:

Road Elevation: Elevating a 3-mile road, 2 feet above BFE will remove the one percent chance of flooding but would be non-compliant with the no-fill NFIP requirements. This elevated “barrier” will essentially prevent runoff to naturally drain to the ocean. This will trap water east side of the road where homes and businesses are located. It also means that all connecting roads will have to be re-profiled and drainage systems re-configured.

Wet Floodproofing: Constructing a sea side structural wall to reduce the impact of storm waves will satisfy NFIP requirements. However, permanent openings must be in place for people, vehicles and sea crafts to access the beach and water which defeats the purpose of wet-floodproofing. Wet floodproofing is impractical for this project.

As mentioned before, the National Flood Insurance Program prohibits any structural fill in a VE or coastal A zone. However, we must ensure that this project does not contribute adversely to future flooding. In fact, the resurfacing and repairs that this project proposes will, as aforementioned, enhance the natural values and contributes to the restoration and preservation of the floodplain.

7. Determination of No Practicable Alternative

Having considered possible alternatives described in item 6, the Department of Public Works has determined that the best option is the proposed scope of work which is to remove the existing asphalt surface, regrade the existing structural base and repave anew.

8. Implement the Proposed Action

The scope of work of the proposed action is to conform to the original proposal which is to regrade and resurface. Furthermore, repairs of existing surface drainage appurtenances such as curb/gutter and swales will streamline the flow and migration of runoff properly. These components, working in tandem, will improve road safety and enhance floodplain development by ensuring that no potential standing water is retained and that the rate of runoff discharge to seawater is minimized and dispersed. This proposed action is also NFIP compliant.