

# MAPPING TODAY'S FLOOD RISK WHAT REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD KNOW

*Important changes continue to happen with Sarasota County's flood hazard maps. As floodplain boundaries and regulatory flood elevations change, so may how property owners design and construct buildings and develop their property, now and in the future.*

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released revised effective flood hazard maps, known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), for all of Sarasota County on November 4, 2016. These revised FIRMs show the extent to which areas of the county, known as the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), are currently at risk for flooding from the 1% flood. Over the last 30 years, drainage patterns changed and land development occurred, while new mapping and modeling technology significantly improved.

Sarasota County, using local flood studies, has also identified additional areas of the 1% flood not shown on the FEMA FIRMs. This is the Community Flood Hazard Area (CFHA). The CFHA is determined using the same criteria FEMA uses to determine the SFHA. Both areas (SFHA & CFHA) are used for regulating land development and building permits.

Updates are currently underway by FEMA as part of the Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) Program, and by Sarasota County as part of our comprehensive watershed program. To learn more about the scheduled updates, including the Risk MAP coastal study, go to: [www.scgov.net/government/public-works/flood-maps](http://www.scgov.net/government/public-works/flood-maps)

## UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS

It is important for real estate professionals to understand any changes in the maps, to properly communicate to their clients a property's flood risk and any implications to the federal flood insurance requirements.

Properties mapped into high-risk zones will require flood insurance by most lenders. Flood insurance costs can increase when map changes reflect a higher risk.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) currently provides lower-cost rating options and allows transferring of a policy and its rates to a new owner. Real estate professionals should refer clients to an insurance agent for a full explanation of insurance options, such as grandfathering. Properties mapped into moderate or low-risk zones, may not require flood insurance, although it is recommended. While the risk may be reduced, it is not eliminated. Nearly 25% of all flood claims occur in these moderate or low-risk zones.

## PROPERTIES RE-MAPPED IN A HIGH-RISK FLOOD ZONE

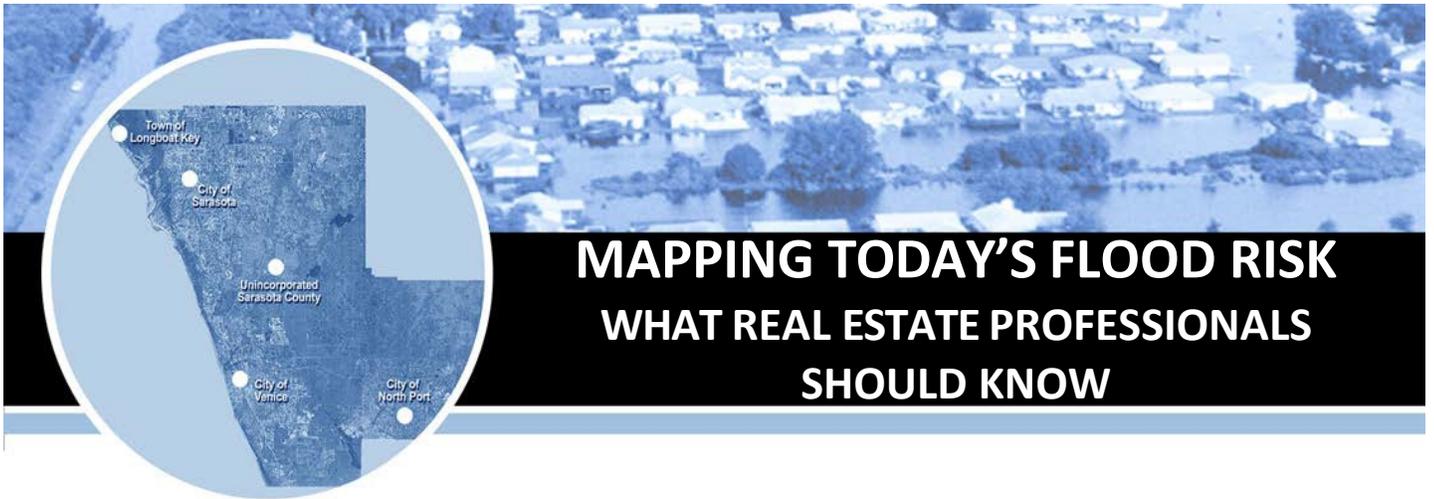
When selling their property, home and business owners should disclose whether a property is or will be re-mapped into a high-risk flood zone (known as a Special Flood Hazard Area [SFHA] and shown on the flood maps with letters beginning with "A" or "V"). Buildings in these areas are required to carry flood insurance for loans taken through federally regulated or insured lenders.

As the flood maps are revised, it is crucial for both real estate professionals and property owners to know if a property currently in a moderate- or low-risk zone (shown on the flood maps as an "X" or "X-shaded" zone) will be re-mapped into a high-risk zone.

When an update occurs, FEMA will release "preliminary" flood maps (FIRMs). Real estate professionals should review them to determine if there will be a change in their clients' property flood risk and know when the change will become effective.

Knowing in advance if a property is being re-mapped into a high-risk flood zone will help avoid delays caused when flood insurance is suddenly required at closing. If the buyer is aware of these upcoming changes, they may be able to take advantage of the NFIP's lower-cost flood insurance rating options. Transferring flood insurance policies from current homeowners to new owners at the time of purchase can also help to keep insurance costs down.





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## WHEN A PROPERTY IS RE-MAPPED OUT OF A HIGH-RISK FLOOD ZONE

When an update occurs, some properties will be re-mapped out of a high-risk zone and into a moderate or low-risk zone (shown on the new maps as an "X" or shaded "X" zone). Although the federal regulation for the mandatory purchase of insurance may be lifted, it is at the lender's discretion to continue to require coverage. Property owners should be reminded that the risk of flooding is reduced—**not eliminated**—in these zones. Lower-cost flood insurance is available through the NFIP's Preferred Risk Policy.

## STAY INFORMED

Impending changes in zones could be a key selling point, so it is important for real estate professionals to stay informed about any upcoming changes. Knowing when and where map changes are occurring allows real estate professionals to properly prepare explanations about the map changes and what insurance options are available to their clients. Real estate professionals should prepare for closings by staying in contact with local officials when Sarasota County goes through a mapping revision process. They should proactively inform clients about their options based on impending flood zone changes. Detailed explanations can be provided by their insurance agent.

## WHERE TO VIEW THE MAPS

View current effective FIRMs and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) reports online on the FEMA Map Service Center web site: [www.msc.fema.gov/portal/home](http://www.msc.fema.gov/portal/home)

See Sarasota County's FEMA Flood Zone Locator at: [www.ags3.scgov.net/sarcoflood/](http://www.ags3.scgov.net/sarcoflood/) to identify flood risk on the current FIRMs. Please be advised the files are best viewed with a high-speed internet connection.

## MAPPING MILESTONES

**November 4, 2016 - FEMA Digital Flood Maps became effective.**

### PENDING:

2018 - County local studies for Phillippi Creek, Little Sarasota Bay, and the Lemon Bay watersheds were submitted to FEMA to include in the revised FIRM.

Late 2019\* - Preliminary maps planned for FEMA Risk MAP coastal study and the local studies for Phillippi Creek, Little Sarasota Bay, and the Lemon Bay watersheds.

*\* Date subject to change.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[Visit www.scgov.net/government/public-works/flood-maps/ to learn more about mapping revisions and the process as they occur.](http://www.scgov.net/government/public-works/flood-maps/)

For general information, call the Sarasota County Contact Center at 941-861-5000, Monday through Friday (except holidays) from 8 am. to 5 p.m.

For technical flood map information, call the FEMA Map Information eXchange (FMIX) at 1-877-336-2627 or their website at: [www.floodmaps.fema.gov/fhm/fmx\\_main.html](http://www.floodmaps.fema.gov/fhm/fmx_main.html). The FMIX hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:00 am through 6:30 pm Eastern Standard Time.

For information on Flood Protection go to: [www.sarasota.wateratlas.usf.edu/flood-protection#flood-protection](http://www.sarasota.wateratlas.usf.edu/flood-protection#flood-protection)

