

FACT SHEET: UNDERSTANDING FLOODPLAIN ZONING

Deerfield Planning Board



WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF FLOODPLAIN ZONING?

The purpose of the revised Floodplain Zoning is to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community by protecting life and property from the detrimental effects of floods; to prevent pollution of the environment, to preserve the natural flood control and flood storage characteristics of the floodplain; and to prevent any alterations to the natural flow of the river.

WHY DO WE NEED FLOODPLAIN ZONING?

Deerfield's existing floodplain zoning is outdated and does not adequately protect the town's floodplain areas. The existing zoning also does not address the increase in flood frequency and severity expected with climate change, and does not meet the standards of the National Flood Insurance Program.

WHERE IS THE FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT?

The Floodplain District includes all lands lying along the Deerfield and Connecticut Rivers and their tributary streams that would be flooded during the occurrence of the 100-year flood. These areas are mapped and designated a Zone A, A1-30 on the Deerfield Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and Flood Boundary- Floodway Maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

HOW DOES FLOODPLAIN ZONING WORK?

The proposed revisions to the Floodplain Zoning bylaw clarify the uses that are permitted, prohibited and allowed by Special Permit in the Floodplain district.

Permitted uses include: agriculture, forestry, recreation, conservation, wildlife management, and buildings lawfully existing prior to the adoption of the bylaw.

Prohibited uses include: altering, dumping, filling or removal of riverine materials, dams or impoundments, commercial or industrial uses, parking or storage of vehicles or trailers within 200 feet of the riverbank, dumping of garbage, and discharge of pollutants.

Uses by Special Permit include: single family homes, residential accessory uses, and enlargement or alteration of an existing structure.



HOW DO SPECIAL PERMITS WORK IN THE FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT?

The revised bylaw clarifies the Special Permit process in the Floodplain district, and the findings that the Planning Board must make to issue a Special Permit. These include findings that the proposed use must not result in an increase in flood levels, and must meet State Building Code standards for flood proofing and elevation of the first floor above base flood elevation. Septic systems must be located as far as possible from the riverbank.

