

Final Notice and Public Explanation of a Proposed Activity in a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Designated Floodplain

To: All interested Agencies include all Federal, State, and Local, Groups and Individuals

This is to give notice that Responsible Entity under 24 CFR Part 58 has determined that the following proposed action under HUD's Economic Development Initiative (EDI) Community Project Funding (CPF) funding grants. Atlantic Mills is located in the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) floodplain, and the Responsible Entity will be identifying and evaluating practicable alternatives to locating the action within the floodplain and the potential impacts on the floodplain from the proposed action, as required by Executive Order 11988, as amended by Executive Order 13690, in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 in Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands. The proposed project is being promoted by the Providence Redevelopment Authority and the Project's location is 120 Manton Avenue, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island, 02909. The project site encompasses 4.7-acres of land, where the Climate-Informed Science Approach (CISA) was available for assessment. The extent of the FFRMS floodplain was determined using a Climate Informed Science Approach (CISA) / 0.2 percent flood approach / or freeboard value approach. The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) support tool determined that the project is designated as non-critical, located near a riverine floodplain, and has a projected service life through 2060. In accordance with the Freeboard Value Approach, a 2-foot freeboard is applicable, corresponding to an FFRMS flood elevation of 33.8 feet North American Datum of 1988 (NAVD88).

The proposed project at 120-122 Manton focuses on rehabilitation and resilience improvements to enhance stormwater management, flood protection, and public infrastructure. Covering approximately 207,102 square feet, the project includes parking lot repairs and stormwater resilience measures to enhance durability and reduce flooding. Retaining wall upgrades will help prevent river flooding and safeguard the property. Stormwater improvements will incorporate landscaping, efficient drainage systems, and optimized water flow design. Infrastructure upgrades include installing a flood-resistant transformer to ensure electrical reliability during flood events. Soil remediation efforts will address environmental concerns and enhance site stability. Additionally, the project promotes community connectivity by establishing an easement and collaborating on the development of a city bike path.

The project will deliver essential infrastructure improvements. Currently, sections of the bike path are poorly situated, running parallel to heavy vehicle traffic with minimal barriers protecting cyclists. Frequent damage to safety dividers from automobiles increases maintenance costs, making upkeep more challenging.

Hundreds of small businesses operate in the area, and flooding disrupts their productivity, making their spaces unusable. Reducing flooding will help keep these businesses operational, supporting the local economy. The transformer is a vital infrastructure component for attracting and retaining businesses that depend on reliable, high-voltage electricity, such as welding shops, small manufacturers, and artisan enterprises. As businesses transition to greener energy sources, their electricity demands continue to grow.

Responsible Entity has considered the following alternatives and mitigation measures to minimize adverse impacts and to restore and preserve natural and beneficial functions and intrinsic values of the existing floodplain:

(i) This project area was selected as needing support and reinvigoration as it is a hub for small businesses and to ensure the safety for automobiles and cyclists.

(ii) The area includes a historic and architecturally significant mill complex that is irreplaceable. Preserving Providence's industrial history and unique architectural fingerprint was a priority in spite of the floodplain.

(iii) An alternative option would have been to relocate the project to a site outside the floodplain to eliminate flood risk. However, this option was not considered, as the existing property holds architectural and historic significance to the City of Providence. Preserving and revitalizing this site is essential to maintaining the area's cultural heritage and economic vitality. Additionally, relocating businesses and infrastructure to a new location would have been cost-prohibitive and disruptive to the established small business community. Instead, the selected approach focuses on flood mitigation and resilience improvements to ensure the long-term viability of the site while safeguarding its historical value.

(iv) To reduce flood risks and enhance resilience, the project will incorporate several mitigation strategies. The flood-safe transformer will likely be elevated and strategically placed in front of the building to minimize water exposure and ensure reliable electrical service during flood events. Additional stormwater management measures, such as improved drainage systems and permeable surfaces, will be implemented to mitigate flooding impacts. These efforts will help protect local businesses, infrastructure, and transportation networks while supporting the long-term sustainability of the area.

The Responsible Entity has reevaluated alternatives to building in the floodplain and has determined that it has no practicable alternative to floodplain development. Environmental files documenting compliance with Executive Order 11988, as amended by Executive Order 13690, are available for public inspection, review and copying upon request at the times and location delineated in the last paragraph of this notice for receipt of comments.

There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in floodplain and those who have an interest in the protection of the natural environment should be given an opportunity to express their concerns and provide information about these areas. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information and request for public comment about floodplain can facilitate and enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks and impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas. Third, as a matter of fairness, when the Federal government determines it will participate in actions taking place in floodplain, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

Written comments must be received by the Providence Redevelopment Agency at the following address on or before March 28, 2025, by mailing: Providence Redevelopment Agency, 444 Westminster Street, Suite 3A, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island, 02903-3215 Attention: Nicholas Cicchitelli, Director of Real Estate. Comments may also be submitted via email at ncicchitelli@providenceri.gov. A full description of the project may also be viewed from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm at the abovementioned address. Comments may also be submitted by phone at (401) 680-8418.