

**❧ ORDINANCE – FLOODPLAIN DISTRICTS ❧**

**An Ordinance To Amend And Re-Enact Town Code Sections  
175-74, 175-75, 175-76, 175-77, 175-78, 175-79, 175-80, 175-81, 175-82, 175-83, And 175-84  
Pertaining To The Establishment Of Floodplain Districts By Requiring The Issuance Of  
Permits For Development, And By Providing Factors And Conditions For Variances To  
The Terms Of The Ordinances.**

**BE IT AMENDED AND RE-ENACTED** by the Town of Front Royal, Virginia,  
as follows:

Notwithstanding any other ordinance or other enactment heretofore adopted and currently in force in this jurisdiction, the following is hereby adopted and ordained to be effective as set forth herein below:

**§ 175-74 GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

**A. Statement of Intent.**

Floodplains are a valuable resource that provide, in addition to flood passage, agricultural land, recreational land, and wildlife habitat. In addition, they provide groundwater recharge and pollution protection services. As such, the Town Plan calls for protecting currently undeveloped floodplains from incompatible development.

**B. Purpose.**

The purpose of these provisions is to prevent: the loss of life and property, the creation of health and safety hazards, the disruption of commerce and governmental services, the extraordinary and unnecessary expenditure of public funds for flood protection and relief, and the impairment of the tax base by:

1. Regulating uses, activities, and development which, alone or in combination with other existing or future uses, activities, and development, will cause unacceptable increases in flood heights, velocities, and frequencies;
2. Restricting or prohibiting certain uses, activities, and development from locating within districts subject to flooding;
3. Requiring all those uses, activities, and developments that do occur in flood-prone districts to be protected and/or flood-proofed against flooding and flood damage; and,
4. Protecting individuals from buying land and structures which are unsuited for intended purposes because of flood hazards.

**C. Applicability.**

These provisions shall apply to all lands within the jurisdiction of the Town of Front Royal and identified as a 1% annual chance of a flood (Special Flood Hazard Area), by the Federal Insurance Administration.

**D. Compliance and Liability.**

1. No land shall hereafter be developed and no structure shall be located, relocated, constructed, reconstructed, enlarged, or structurally altered except in full compliance with the terms and provisions of this ordinance and any other applicable ordinances and regulations which apply to uses within the jurisdiction of this ordinance.

2. The degree of flood protection sought by the provisions of this ordinance is considered reasonable for regulatory purposes and is based on acceptable engineering methods of study. Larger floods may occur on rare occasions. Flood heights may be increased by man-made or natural causes, such as ice jams and bridge openings restricted by debris. This ordinance does not imply that districts outside the Floodplain District or that land uses permitted within such district will be free from flooding or flood damages.

3. Records of actions associated with administering this ordinance shall be kept on file and maintained by the Zoning Administrator.

4. This ordinance shall not create liability on the part of the Town of Front Royal or any officer or employee thereof for any flood damages that result from reliance on this ordinance or any administrative decision lawfully made thereunder.

E. Abrogation and Greater Restrictions.

This ordinance supersedes any ordinance currently in effect in flood-prone districts. However, any underlying ordinance shall remain in full force and effect to the extent that its provisions are more restrictive than this ordinance.

F. Severability.

If any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance shall be declared invalid for any reason whatever, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this ordinance. The remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect; and for this purpose, the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

**§ 175-75 DEFINITIONS.**

A. Base flood - The flood having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

B. Base flood elevation - The Federal Emergency Management Agency designated as the Special Flood Hazard Area.

C. Basement - Any area of the building having its floor sub-grade (below ground level) on all sides.

D. Board of Zoning Appeals - The board appointed to review appeals made by individuals with regard to decisions of the Zoning Administrator in the interpretation of this ordinance.

E. Breakaway wall - A wall that is not part of the structural support of the building and is intended through its design and construction to collapse under specific lateral loading forces, without causing damage to the elevated portion of the building or supporting foundation system.

F. Development - Any man-made change to improved or unimproved real estate, including, but not limited to, buildings or other structures, mining, dredging, filling, grading, paving, excavation or drilling operations or storage of equipment or materials.

G. Elevated building - A non-basement building built to have the lowest floor elevated above the ground level by means of fill, solid foundation perimeter walls, pilings, or columns (posts and piers).

- H. Encroachment - The advance or infringement of uses, plant growth, fills, excavation, buildings, permanent structures or development into a floodplain, which may impede or alter the flow capacity of a floodplain.
- I. Flood or flooding -
1. A general or temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land areas from:
    - a. The overflow of inland or tidal waters; or,
    - b. The unusual and rapid accumulation or run-off of surface waters from any source.
  2. The collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or other body of water as a result of erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water exceeding anticipated cyclical levels or suddenly caused by an unusually high water level in a natural body of water, accompanied by a severe storm, or by an unanticipated force of nature such as flash flood or an abnormal tidal surge, or by some similarly unusual and unforeseeable event which results in flooding as defined in paragraph 1 (a) of this definition.
- J. Floodplain or flood-prone area - Any land area susceptible to being inundated by water from any source.
- K. Floodway - The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height.
- L. Freeboard - A factor of safety usually expressed in feet above a flood level for purposes of floodplain management. "Freeboard" tends to compensate for the many unknown factors that could contribute to flood heights greater than the height calculated for a selected size flood and floodway conditions, such as wave action, bridge openings, and the hydrological effect of urbanization in the watershed.
- M. Flood-proofing - any combination of structural and non-structural additions, changes, or adjustments to structures which reduce or eliminate flood damage to real estate or improved real property, water and sanitary facilities, structures and their contents.
- N. Lowest floor - The lowest floor of the lowest enclosed area (including basement). An unfinished or flood-resistant enclosure, usable solely for parking of vehicles, building access or storage in an area other than a basement area is not considered a building's lowest floor provided, that such enclosure is not built so as to render the structure in violation of the applicable non-elevation design requirements of Federal Code 44CFR §60.3.
- O. New construction - For the purposes of determining insurance rates, structures for which the "start of construction" commenced on or after the effective date of an initial Flood Insurance Rate Map on or after December 31, 1974, whichever is later, and includes any subsequent improvements to such structures. For floodplain management purposes, *new construction* means structures for which *start of construction* commenced on or after the effective date

of a floodplain management regulation adopted by a community and includes any subsequent improvements to such structures.

P. Recreational vehicle - A vehicle which is:

1. Built on a single chassis;
2. 400 square feet or less when measured at the largest horizontal projection;
3. Designed to be self-propelled or permanently towable by a light-duty truck; and,
4. Designed primarily not for use as a permanent dwelling but as temporary living quarters for recreational camping, travel, or seasonal use.

Q. Special flood hazard area - The land in the floodplain subject to a one (1%) percent or greater chance of being flooded in any given year, commonly known as the one-hundred year (100-year floodplain).

R. Start of construction - The date the building permit was issued, provided the actual start of construction, repair, reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, placement, substantial improvement or other improvement was within 180 days of the permit date. The actual start means either the first placement of permanent construction of a structure on a site, such as the pouring of slab or footings, the installation of piles, the construction of columns, or any work beyond the stage of excavation. Permanent construction does not include land preparation, such as clearing, grading and filling; nor does it include the installation on the property of accessory buildings, such as garages or sheds not occupied as dwelling units or not part of the main structure. For a substantial improvement, the actual start of the construction means the first alteration of any wall, ceiling, floor, or other structural part of a building, whether or not that alteration affects the external dimensions of the building.

S. Substantial damage - Damage of any origin sustained by a structure whereby the cost of restoring the structure to it's before damaged condition would equal or exceed 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the damage occurred.

T. Substantial improvement - Any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the *start of construction* of the improvement. This term includes structures which have incurred *substantial damage* regardless of the actual repair work performed. The term does not, however, include any project for improvement of a structure to correct existing violations of state or local health, sanitary, or safety code specifications which have been identified by the local code enforcement official and which are the minimum necessary to assure safe living conditions.

U. Watercourse - A lake, river, creek, stream, wash, channel or other topographic feature on or over which waters flow at least periodically. Watercourse includes specifically designated areas in which substantial flood damage may occur.

## **§ 175-76 ESTABLISHMENT OF FLOODPLAIN DISTRICTS.**

A. Basis of Districts.

The various floodplain districts shall include special flood hazard areas. The basis for the delineation of these districts shall be the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) for the Town of Front Royal prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Insurance Administration, dated June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, as amended.

B. The Floodway District is delineated, for purposes of this ordinance, using the criterion that certain areas within the floodplain must be capable of carrying the waters of the Special Flood Hazard Area without increasing the water surface elevation of that flood more than one (1) foot at any point. The areas included in this District are specifically defined in Table 4 of the above-referenced Flood Insurance Study and shown on the accompanying Flood Boundary and Floodway Map or Flood Insurance Rate Map.

C. The Flood-Fringe District shall be that area of the Special Flood Hazard Area not included in the Floodway District. The basis for the outermost boundary of the District shall be the Special Flood Hazard Area elevations contained in the flood profiles of the above-referenced Flood Insurance Study and as shown on the accompanying Flood Boundary and Floodway Map or Flood Insurance Rate Map.

D. The Approximated Floodplain District shall be those areas identified as an A Zone on the maps accompanying the Flood Insurance Study. In these zones, no detailed flood profiles or elevations are provided, but the Special Flood Hazard Area boundary has been approximated.

**§ 175-77 OVERLAY CONCEPT.**

A. The Floodplain Districts described above shall be overlays to the existing underlying districts as shown on the Official Zoning Ordinance Map, and as such, the provisions for the floodplain districts shall serve as a supplement to the underlying district provisions.

B. If there is any conflict between the provisions or requirements of the Floodplain Districts and those of any underlying district, the more restrictive provisions and/or those pertaining to the floodplain districts shall apply.

C. In the event any provision concerning a Floodplain District is declared inapplicable as a result of any legislative or administrative actions or judicial decision, the basic underlying provisions shall remain applicable.

**§ 175-78 FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT BOUNDARIES.**

A. The boundaries of the Special Flood Hazard Area and Floodplain Districts are established as shown on the Flood Boundary and Floodway Map and/or Flood Insurance Rate Map which is declared to be a part of this ordinance and which shall be kept on file at the Town of Front Royal Planning offices.

**District Boundary Changes.**

B. The delineation of any of the Floodplain Districts may be revised by the Town of Front Royal where natural or man-made changes have occurred and/or where more detailed studies have been conducted or undertaken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers or other qualified agency, or an individual documents the need for such change. However, prior to any such change, approval must be obtained from the Federal Insurance Administration.

**Interpretation of District Boundaries.**

C. Interpretations of the boundaries of the Floodplain Districts shall be made by the Zoning Administrator

Should a dispute arise concerning the boundaries of any of the Districts, the Board of Zoning Appeals shall make the necessary determination. The person questioning or contesting the location of the District boundary shall be given a reasonable opportunity to present his case to the Board and to submit his own technical evidence if he so desires.

**§ 175-79 DISTRICT PROVISIONS.**

**A. Permit Requirement.**

All uses, activities, and development occurring within any floodplain district shall be undertaken only upon the issuance of a zoning permit. Such development shall be undertaken only in strict compliance with the provisions of the Ordinance and with all other applicable codes and ordinances, as amended, and the Town of Front Royal Subdivision Regulations. Prior to the issuance of any such permit, the Zoning Administrator shall require all applications to include compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

**B. Site Plans and Permit Applications.**

All applications for development within any floodplain district and all building permits issued for the floodplain shall incorporate the following information:

1. For structures to be elevated, the elevation of the lowest floor (including basement).

2. For structures to be flood-proofed (non-residential only), the elevation to which the structure will be flood-proofed.

**§ 175-80 GENERAL STANDARDS.**

In all special flood hazard areas the property owner is ultimately responsible for insuring the following provisions have been considered:

A. New construction and substantial improvements shall be anchored to prevent flotation, collapse or lateral movement of the structure.

B. New construction and substantial improvements shall be constructed with materials and utility equipment resistant to flood damage.

C. New construction or substantial improvements shall be constructed by methods and practices that minimize flood damage.

D. Electrical, heating, ventilation, plumbing, air conditioning equipment and other service facilities, including duct work, shall be designed and/or located so as to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during conditions of flooding.

E. New and replacement water supply systems shall be designed to minimize or eliminate infiltration of flood waters into the system.

F. New and replacement sanitary sewage systems shall be designed to minimize or eliminate infiltration of flood waters into the systems and discharges from the systems into flood waters.

G. On-site waste disposal systems shall be located and constructed to avoid impairment to them or contamination from them during flooding.

H. Any alteration, repair, reconstruction or improvements to a building that is in compliance with the provisions of this ordinance shall meet the requirements of “new construction” as contained in this ordinance.

I. Any alteration, repair, reconstruction or improvements to a building that is not in compliance with the provisions of this ordinance, shall be undertaken only if said non-conformity is not furthered, extended, or replaced.

J. Prior to any proposed alteration or relocation of any channels or of any watercourse, stream, etc., within this jurisdiction a permit shall be obtained from the U. S. Corps of Engineers, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (a joint permit application is available from any of these organizations). Furthermore, notification of the proposal shall be given by the applicant to all affected adjacent jurisdictions, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management) and the Federal Insurance Administration.

K. The flood carrying capacity within an altered or relocated portion of any watercourse shall be maintained.

#### **§ 175-81 SPECIFIC STANDARDS.**

In all special flood hazard areas where base flood elevations have been provided in the Flood Insurance Study or generated according to Section 175-81.1(A), the following provisions shall apply:

##### **A. Residential Construction.**

New construction or substantial improvement of any residential structure shall have the lowest floor, including basement, elevated no lower than one (1) foot above the base flood elevation.

##### **B. Non-Residential Construction.**

New construction or substantial improvement of any commercial, industrial, or non-residential building shall have the lowest floor, including basement, elevated to no lower than one (1) foot above the base flood elevation. Buildings located in all AE, and AH zones may be flood-proofed in lieu of being elevated provided that all areas of the building components below the elevation corresponding to the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) plus one foot are water tight with walls substantially impermeable to the passage of water, and use structural components having the capability of resisting hydrostatic and hydrodynamic loads and the effect of buoyancy. A registered professional engineer or architect shall certify that the standards of this subsection are satisfied.

##### **C. Elevated Buildings.**

Enclosed areas, of new construction or substantially improved structures, which are below the regulatory flood protection elevation shall:

1. Not be designed or used for human habitation, but shall only be used for parking of vehicles, building access, or limited storage of maintenance equipment used in connection with the premises. Access to the enclosed area shall be the minimum necessary to allow for parking of vehicles (garage door) or limited storage of maintenance equipment (standard exterior door), or entry to the living area (stairway or elevator).

The interior portion of such enclosed area shall not be partitioned or finished into separate rooms, except to enclose storage areas;

2. Be constructed entirely of flood resistant materials below the regulatory flood protection elevation;

3. Include, in Zones A and AE measures to automatically equalize hydrostatic flood forces on walls by allowing for the entry and exit of floodwaters. To meet this requirement, the openings must either be certified by a professional engineer or architect or meet the following minimum design criteria:

a. Provide a minimum of two openings on different sides of each enclosed area subject to flooding.

b. The total net area of all openings must be at least one (1) square inch for each square foot of enclosed area subject to flooding.

c. If a building has more than one enclosed area, each area must have openings to allow floodwaters to automatically enter and exit.

d. The bottom of all required openings shall be no higher than one (1) foot above the adjacent grade.

e. Openings may be equipped with screens, louvers, or other opening coverings or devices, provided they permit the automatic flow of floodwaters in both directions.

f. Foundation enclosures made of flexible skirting are not considered enclosures for regulatory purposes, and, therefore, do not require openings. Masonry or wood underpinning, regardless of structural status, is considered an enclosure and requires openings as outlined above.

#### D. Standards for Recreational Vehicles.

All recreational vehicles placed on sites must be fully licensed and ready for highway use (a recreational vehicle is ready for highway use if it is on its wheels or jacking system, is attached to the site only by quick disconnect type utilities and security devices and has no permanently attached additions).

### § 175-81.1 STANDARDS FOR APPROXIMATED FLOODPLAIN.

A. When base flood elevation data or floodway data have not been provided, the Zoning Administrator shall obtain, review, and reasonably utilize any base flood elevation and floodway data available from a federal, state, or any other source, in order to administer the provisions of this section. When such base flood elevation data is utilized, the Zoning Administrator shall obtain

1. The elevation (in relation to the mean sea level) of the lowest floor (including the basement) of all new and substantially improved structures; and,

2. If the structure has been flood-proofed in accordance with the requirements of Section 175-81(B) of this ordinance, the elevation in relation to the mean sea level to which the structure has been flood-proofed.

B. When the data is not available from any source as in Section 175-81.1(A), the lowest floor of the structure shall be elevated to no lower than one (1) foot above the highest adjacent grade.

C. Base flood elevation data shall be provided for subdivision proposals and other proposed development proposals that exceed fifty lots or five acres, whichever is the lesser.

**§ 175-81.2 STANDARDS FOR THE FLOODWAY DISTRICT.**

The following provisions shall apply within the Floodway District:

Encroachments, including fill, new construction, substantial improvements and other developments are prohibited unless certification (with supporting technical data) by a registered professional engineer is provided demonstrating that encroachments shall not result in any increase in flood levels during occurrence of the base flood discharge. The preceding uses, activities and development occurring within any floodway district shall be undertaken only upon the issuance of a special use permit. Development activities in which an increase in the water surface elevation of the base flood may be allowed, provided that the applicant first applies – with the Town of Front Royal endorsement – for a conditional Flood Insurance Rate Map and floodway revision, and receives the approval of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. However, other activities such as demolition in which there is not an increase in the water surface elevation, will require a zoning permit in lieu of a special use permit.

**§175-81.3 FLOODPLAIN VARIANCES: FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED.**

In passing upon applications for Floodplain Variances, the Board of Zoning Appeals shall satisfy all relevant factors and procedures specified in other sections of the zoning ordinance and consider the following additional factors:

- A. The showing of good and sufficient cause.
- B. The danger to life and property due to increased flood heights or velocities caused by encroachments. No variance shall be granted for any proposed use, development, or activity within any Floodway District that will cause any increase in the Special Flood Hazard Area elevation.
- C. The danger that materials may be swept onto other lands or downstream to the injury of others.
- D. The proposed water supply and sanitation systems and the ability of these systems to prevent disease, contamination, and unsanitary conditions.
- E. The susceptibility of the proposed facility and its contents to flood damage and the effect of such damage on the individual owners.
- F. The importance of the services provided by the proposed facility to the community.
- G. The requirements of the facility for a waterfront location.
- H. The availability of alternative locations not subject to flooding for the proposed use.
- I. The compatibility of the proposed use with existing development and development anticipated in the foreseeable future.

- J. The relationship of the proposed use to the comprehensive plan and floodplain management program for the area.
- K. The safety of access by ordinary and emergency vehicles to the property in time of flood.
- L. The expected heights, velocity, duration, rate of rise, and sediment transport of the flood waters expected at the site.
- M. Such other factors which are relevant to the purposes of this ordinance.

The Board of Zoning Appeals may refer any application and accompanying documentation pertaining to any request for a variance to any engineer or other qualified person or agency for technical assistance in evaluating the proposed project in relation to flood heights and velocities, and the adequacy of the plans for flood protection and other related matters.

Variances shall be issued only after the Board of Zoning Appeals has determined that the granting of such will not result in (a) unacceptable or prohibited increases in flood heights, (b) additional threats to public safety, (c) extraordinary public expense; and will not (d) create nuisances, (e) cause fraud or victimization of the public, or (f) conflict with local laws or ordinances.

Variances shall be issued only after the Board of Zoning Appeals has determined that the variance will be the minimum required to provide relief from exceptional hardship to the applicant.

The Board of Zoning Appeals shall notify the applicant for a variance, in writing, that the issuance of a variance to construct a structure below the Special Flood Hazard Area elevation (a) increases the risks to life and property and (b) will result in increased premium rates for flood insurance.

A record shall be maintained of the above notification as well as all variance actions, including justification for the issuance of the variances. Any variances that are issued shall be noted in the annual or biennial report submitted to the Federal Insurance Administrator.

This ordinance shall become effective upon passage.