PROPOSED FLOOD HAZARD POLICY & REGULATION UPDATES

Public Summary

Municipal Development Plan Bylaw 02-21 and Land Use Bylaw 17-21

At a glance

The Town is proposing coordinated updates to its Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) to reflect current provincial flood hazard mapping for the Sheep River Sub-Basin. The proposed changes establish clearer direction for development, redevelopment, subdivision, flood-resilient design and technical review within mapped flood hazard areas.

What is being proposed?

Two related bylaw amendments are proposed:

- Bylaw 23-26 would update the MDP. It sets the Town's long-term policy direction for managing flood risk, public safety, infrastructure, redevelopment and environmental functions.
- Bylaw 22-26 would update the LUB. It establishes the rules, development standards and application requirements used when reviewing subdivision and development proposals.

Together, the amendments are intended to align Town policy and regulation with the updated flood hazard framework while applying different requirements based on the level and type of flood risk.

Important

These are proposed amendments. Council will consider the amending bylaws through the formal bylaw process, including a public hearing. The full amending bylaws, mapping and redline documents in the council package remain the authoritative source for the proposed wording.

The proposed flood hazard framework

The updated Flood Hazard Overlay Map would identify four flood hazard designations. Each designation reflects different flood conditions and therefore a different approach to land use and development review.

Area	What it Means	Proposed Approach
Floodway	The area needed to convey floodwaters and support river processes.	Most restrictive. Preserve flood conveyance and environmental functions; allow only flood-compatible uses and limited replacement of existing buildings.
Flood Fringe	Mapped flood hazard lands outside the Floodway.	Development and redevelopment may be considered where flood risk, safe access and impacts on neighbouring lands are appropriately addressed.
High Hazard Flood Fringe (NEW)	Localized Flood Fringe areas where depth exceeds 1.0 m and/or velocity exceeds 1.0 m/s.	Generally follows Flood Fringe rules, with added attention to site-specific hazards and hydrotechnical review.
Protected Flood Fringe (NEW)	Flood Fringe lands where exposure is reduced by flood protection works or other infrastructure.	Supports reinvestment and redevelopment with flood-resilient design, recognition of residual risk and potential flexibility in mitigation approaches.

How the Municipal Development Plan would change

The proposed MDP amendment would update the existing flood hazard policies in order to:

- incorporate the current provincial flood hazard mapping for the Sheep River Sub-Basin;
- clarify that the 1:200 Designated Flood Level is the basis for flood risk management and development decisions;
- support flood mitigation that is proportionate to risk and responsive to site conditions;
- continue to protect natural assets and the flood conveyance, storage and environmental functions of the river system;
- continue to discourage changes to previously undisturbed land elevations unless supported by professional analysis;
- continue to ensure hazardous-material uses are not located within the flood hazard area; and
- clarify the distinction between the Floodway, Flood Fringe, High Hazard Flood Fringe and Protected Flood Fringe.

Policy direction by area

In the **Floodway**, the priority is to preserve flood conveyance, storage, natural river processes and environmental functions. New development and subdivision would generally not be supported, except for flood-compatible uses and essential infrastructure. Existing development could continue, but replacement or redevelopment must not increase exposure or obstruct flood flows.

In the **Flood Fringe** and **High Hazard Flood Fringe**, development and redevelopment will be considered where risks are safely managed. Development on previously undeveloped lands would be limited, and higher-hazard locations may require site-specific hydrotechnical analysis.

In the **Protected Flood Fringe**, the MDP would encourage redevelopment, intensification and reinvestment while acknowledging that residual flood risk remains. The policy would allow greater flexibility where strict floodproofing requirements would create accessibility barriers or constrain revitalization, infill or strategic development, provided risk and public safety are appropriately managed.

How the Land Use Bylaw would change

The proposed LUB amendment would translate the MDP direction into development rules and review requirements.

Floodway

- Only public utility infrastructure, passive recreation uses, and flood mitigation measures will continue to be allowed in the Floodway. Existing development and uses may continue.
- Subdivision would be limited public land dedication, parcel consolidation and boundary adjustments between existing parcels.
- New buildings and structures are prohibited, except for public utilities, flood or erosion protection works, transportation infrastructure and other approved flood-compatible infrastructure.
- Replacement of an existing building or structure could be considered if it remains substantially within the existing footprint and location and addresses flood hazards.
- Replacement buildings would generally need habitable areas and mechanical and electrical equipment at or above the Flood Protection Elevation, with alternatives considered where strict compliance is not reasonably achievable and equivalent or improved protection is demonstrated.
- Any development must demonstrate that it does not obstruct floodwaters, reduce flood conveyance or increase risk on the site or neighbouring lands.

Flood Fringe and High Hazard Flood Fringe

- The uses allowed by the underlying land use district would continue to apply.
- Subdivision, new development and redevelopment could be considered where flood hazards, safe access, evacuation and flood protection are addressed.
- Habitable floor areas and mechanical and electrical equipment would be located at or above the applicable Flood Protection Elevation.
- Basements could be permitted with appropriate floodproofing, but basement dwelling units would be prohibited in new and existing buildings.
- Access between primary buildings and a public or private road would need to be raised above the Flood Protection Elevation to maintain emergency access.

Protected Flood Fringe

- The uses allowed by the underlying land use district would continue to apply.
- Development and redevelopment would incorporate flood-resilient design appropriate to the proposal.
- Dwelling units below the Flood Protection Elevation would generally be prohibited, although professionally supported alternatives could be considered.
- The Development Authority could require critical systems, such as mechanical, electrical, communications, life-safety and utility equipment, to be located at or above the Flood Protection Elevation where needed.
- Alternative floodproofing approaches could be considered where risk and public safety are appropriately managed and the proposal maintains the intent of the overlay.
- When considering an alternative approach, the Development Authority could consider accessibility, site function, streetscape character, redevelopment and adaptive reuse, strategic development objectives and alignment with the MDP.

Requirements that would apply across flood hazard areas

- Hazardous-material developments would not be permitted in the Floodway, Flood Fringe, High Hazard Flood Fringe or Protected Flood Fringe.
- Excavation, fill, stockpiling, grading or other changes to previously undisturbed ground would require professional analysis showing that flood risk, drainage, conveyance and impacts on adjacent lands can be managed.
- Development would need to address relevant flood, erosion and river-process hazards and avoid increasing flood risk on the site or adjacent lands.

Development permits and technical information

A development permit would be required for all development, redevelopment, additions and changes of use in the Flood Fringe and High Hazard Flood Fringe, including where another section of the LUB or a Direct Control District might otherwise provide an exemption.

Depending on the location and proposal, an application may need to include:

- the applicable Designated Flood Level and Flood Protection Elevation;
- proposed elevations for habitable floors and critical building systems;
- details of building floodproofing measures;
- information about safe access, emergency response and public safety; and
- a hydrotechnical assessment prepared by a qualified professional, where required.

A hydrotechnical assessment may evaluate flood levels, flow, erosion and river processes, the effect of a proposal on flood behaviour and neighbouring lands, and recommended mitigation or design measures. The Development Authority could also require additional technical information where needed to evaluate risk and public safety.

Proposed setback changes

- New buildings would be required to be at least 60 metres from the Top of Bank of the Sheep River, as determined using the most current aerial photography.
- New buildings would be required to be at least 6 metres from the mapped Floodway boundary.

Either setback could be relaxed where a qualified professional demonstrates that a reduced setback can be safely supported and will not adversely affect river or floodway functions, increase risk, or harm the natural environment. The Sheep River provision also recognizes site-specific topography such as elevated escarpments or stable river valley slopes.

Key terms in plain language

Term	Plain-language Meaning
Designated Flood Level (DFL)	The expected water surface elevation for the flood event selected by the Town for planning and risk management.
Flood Protection Elevation (FPE)	The minimum elevation used for flood protection. It is the Designated Flood Level plus freeboard.
Freeboard	An added vertical safety margin that accounts for uncertainty, debris, wave action, climate variability and modelling assumptions.
Building Floodproofing	Measures that prevent or limit floodwater entry and reduce damage, such as raising buildings or utilities, using flood-resistant materials and protecting openings or mechanical systems.

Term	Plain-language Meaning
Hydrotechnical Assessment	A qualified professional's assessment of flood and river hazards, potential impacts and recommended mitigation.
Qualified Professional	A person with relevant education and experience who is registered and authorized under Alberta legislation to provide professional opinions or designs in their area of practice.
Redevelopment	Work on an already developed site, including replacement, reconstruction, expansion, significant alteration or a change of use.

What this could mean for property owners and applicants

- Properties may be identified within one of four updated flood hazard designations on the proposed Flood Hazard Overlay Map.
- The type and scale of development supported would depend on the mapped designation and site-specific flood conditions.
- Some applications would require additional design information or professional studies to demonstrate that flood risk and public safety are appropriately addressed.
- Existing buildings in the Floodway would not automatically be required to be removed. The amendments focus on what may occur when replacement or redevelopment is proposed.
- The Protected Flood Fringe would continue to recognize residual risk while providing a more flexible framework for redevelopment and reinvestment than other flood hazard designations.

Review the detailed amendments

This summary highlights the main proposed changes but does not replace the draft bylaws. Readers should consult proposed Bylaw 22-26, proposed Bylaw 23-26, the Flood Hazard Overlay Map and the redline documents in the Council package for the complete wording and to understand how the amendments may apply to a specific property.