SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We invite your input on:

- Is the proposed direction clear?
- What questions do you have about how this may affect your property?
- Are there any local conditions or property details we should be aware of?
- What additional information would help you understand the proposed changes?

Your input will help us:

- Improve how information is communicated
- Better understand property-specific conditions
- Identify local knowledge and insights that may inform the proposed updates
- Clarify questions and information needs within the community

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Why updating flood hazard policies, regulations & mapping matters for Okotoks

The updated Sheep River flood maps provide new information about potential flood hazards. By updating Town policies and regulations, Okotoks can make informed decisions that enhance community resilience and align with long-term goals.

This work helps the Town:

- **Protect people, homes, businesses and critical infrastructure by**
  - Mitigating the impact of flooding on community assets and infrastructure.
- **Reduce long-term financial risk by**
  - Aligning with the Town's principles of being fiscally responsible and responsive.
- **Support safe, sustainable development by**
  - Ensuring new construction and redevelopment follow clear standards informed by technical information.
- **Maintain a strong, accessible and resilient downtown by**
  - Ensuring redevelopment remains safe, vibrant and welcoming in the downtown, recognizing the role of existing infrastructure (like the CPKC railway embankment) in mitigating flood risks in that area.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

How this aligns with Town plans and community priorities

Updating flood hazard policies ensures the Town's decisions are coordinated across all major plans, including:

- **Municipal Development Plan (MDP):**
  - Guides responsible land use, growth management and long-term community resilience.
- **Land Use Bylaw (LUB):**
  - Provides clear, consistent development rules that reflect updated hazard information.
- **Environmental Master Plan:**
  - Protects natural systems, river health and the ecosystem services that reduce flood and erosion risk.
- **Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan:**
  - Ensures the riverfront area remains mostly natural with contextually sensitive development where flood mitigation can be implemented.

Together, these updates help the Town:

- Make defensible, transparent decisions
- Provide predictable requirements for landowners and developers
- Protect the Sheep River corridor, natural assets and community safety
- Ensure future growth aligns with community values and long-term resilience

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Work that's been done so far

Flood Vulnerability Assessment – Completed

The Town has completed a study to better understand how flooding and river movement could affect homes, infrastructure and municipal services. This work helps inform broader flood risk planning and decision-making.

Risk Assessment Workshop – Upcoming

The Town will continue working with staff and technical experts to evaluate flood-related risks and considerations. This work supports broader flood resilience and risk management planning and will help inform future priorities and actions related to municipal infrastructure and risk reduction.

TODAY'S TOPIC:

Policy & Regulation Review – In Progress

- **The Town is reviewing flood-related policies and development regulations to reflect new hazard information and technical analysis. This review is one of several initiatives underway to help ensure flood-related decisions are informed by current technical information and expert analysis.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What's changed in the provincial mapping

In 2025, the province released new Sheep River Flood Hazard Mapping, replacing the older 1996 maps. The updated study uses modern data and modelling, expands mapping into areas that were not previously assessed and introduces two new hazard categories:

1. **High Hazard Flood Fringe**
2. **Protected Flood Fringe**

How Provincial Mapping Works

Provincial flood hazard mapping is based on the 1:100-year design flood. It identifies hazard areas using:

- **Flood conveyance**
  (how water moves through the river & floodplain)
- **Flood depth**
- **Flood velocity**

This mapping forms the foundation for municipal flood hazard policies.

What's Different from the 1996 Maps?

- The floodway is generally similar to the 1996 maps, unless new information supports a change.
- The 1996 maps had simpler, more generalized boundaries; the 2025 maps show more detailed flood boundaries based on updated modelling and information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What the flood hazard categories mean

Floodway	The main river channel and adjacent floodplain needed to carry floodwater. Water is generally **deepest and fastest-moving** in this area.
Flood Fringe	Land outside the Floodway that may still flood during the 1:100-year design flood. Water is generally shallower and slower-moving than in the Floodway.
***NEW* High Hazard Flood Fringe**	Areas within the Flood Fringe where water is deeper than 1.0 metre, moving faster than 1.0 metre per second, or both. These conditions may occur in small, localized areas.
***NEW* Protected Flood Fringe**	Areas where existing infrastructure reduces flood exposure. In the case of Okotoks, the protected flood fringe is provided by the presence of the CPKC railway embankment that incidentally provides flood protection.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How the Town can use provincial mapping

Provincial mapping sets the flood hazard boundaries

✕ What the Town can't do

- Change or reinterpret those boundaries. Okotoks accepts the provincial mapping as provided.

✓ What the Town can do

- Use setbacks or offsets from mapped hazard limits to simplify or smooth boundaries for practical use.

- Establish clear, consistent development guidelines through policy in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and regulation in the Land Use Bylaw (LUB).

These tools help ensure development rules are predictable, transparent and easier for landowners to understand and follow.

PROPOSED APPROACH

Floodway

Current Approach	• Highly restricts development in the Floodway, allowing certain flood - compatible uses including: passive recreation, essential infrastructure, public utilities and flood protection works. • Allows limited redevelopment only to replace an exisitng building or structure in the same location, and only where the Town determines that flood hazards can be safely managed.
Proposed Approach	• New development in the Floodway would remain highly restricted, maintaining allowance for flood compatible uses, essential infrastructure, utilities and flood protection works. • Existing buildings cannot be redeveloped. • On properties that contain both Floodway and Flood Fringe areas, development may be considered outside the Floodway if all applicable requirements are met.
Rationale	• The Floodway experiences the highest flood risk and plays an important role in carrying floodwater during flood events. Buildings and structures can affect flood flows and increase exposure to flood hazards. • Floodway lands are best suited to uses that can tolerate periodic flooding.
What does this mean?	• **Development restrictions in the Floodway would remain largely the same.** • **The key change being proposed is that existing buildings could no longer be redeveloped.**

PROPOSED APPROACH

Flood Fringe & High Hazard Flood Fringe

Current Approach	• Development in the Flood Fringe may be considered through the discretionary approval process. • Floodproofing and elevation requirements apply. • Additional requirements may apply at the subdivision and site development stages. • The current regulations do not separately address the High Hazard Flood Fringe, a new flood hazard category.
Proposed Approach	• Recognize the High Hazard Flood Fringe as a distinct flood hazard category. • Continue considering development in the Flood Fringe, including the High Hazard Flood Fringe where it can be demonstrated that flood risks can be addressed. • Require site-specific technical information to understand flood conditions and support development decisions. Floodproofing and mitigation requirements would reflect the site, proposed development and nature of the hazard.
Rationale	• Flood conditions can vary significantly between properties. • High Hazard Flood Fringe areas may be identified due to water depth, flow velocity, or both - in some cases, proposed grading, building design, or site improvements may change the conditions contributing to the designation. • Professional assessment helps inform development decisions.
What does this mean?	• **High Hazard Flood Fringe is introduced – development may continue to be considered in both flood fringe areas** • **Additional technical information may be required to support development decisions.** • **Applicants may need to demonstrate how flood risks will be addressed.**

PROPOSED UPDATES

Protected Flood Fringe

Current Approach	• The Protected Flood Fringe is not currently identified as a separate category in the MDP or LUB. • Development is managed through existing land use districts and general development requirements.
Proposed Approach	• Recognize the Protected Flood Fringe as a distinct flood hazard category. • Continue allowing development and redevelopment, subject to appropriate flood protection measures. • Requirements would recognize the protection provided by existing infrastructure while addressing applicable flood risks.
Rationale	• Existing infrastructure helps reduce flood exposure in this area. • Much of this area is already developed and includes homes, businesses and parts of downtown. • Applying the same floodproofing requirements used in other higher-risk areas can create challenges for redevelopment, accessibility and the design of buildings and public spaces. • The proposed approach balances flood protection with supporting a vibrant, accessible and attractive downtown.

What does this mean?	• **Development and redevelopment may continue to be considered, but may require:**
	  ◦ **Flood-resilient building and site design.**
	  ◦ **Protection of important building systems and services.**
	  ◦ **Technical information to support development decisions.**
	  ◦ **Measures that address site-specific flood conditions.**

PROPOSED APPROACH

Setbacks

Current Approach	The Town's Land Use Bylaw currently includes a 60 m setback from the high-water level of the Sheep River.
Proposed Approach	• **60 metre** river process setback retained, with flexibility if a qualified assessment shows a smaller setback is safe. • Introduce a **6 metre** Floodway setback for buildings in the Flood Fringe, High Hazard Flood Fringe, and Protected Flood Fringe to provide a buffer that helps maintain flood conveyance and provides space for access and temporary or permanent flood protection measures.
Rationale	Setbacks keep people and property safe, accounting for natural river behavior, ensuring development isn't placed where the river is likely to go.
What does this mean?	Where the 60 metre setback lies outside the Floodway, development is restricted as if it were inside the Floodway. Development of buildings is also restricted in Flood Fringe, High Hazard Flood Fringe and Protected Flood Fringe areas within a 6 metre setback from the Floodway.

WHAT'S NEXT

After today, we will:

- **Review What We Heard**: The project team will compile questions, comments and property-specific information.

- **Share What We Learned**: A public "What We Learned" report will summarize key themes and be posted to the project webpage.

- **Refine the Proposed Approach**: Feedback and the flood risk assessment will help refine MDP and LUB updates.

- **First Reading on September 28**: The proposed changes will be reviewed by Council for the first time. No decisions will be made at this meeting.

- **Public Hearing & Council Decision on October 26:** Council will review and debate the proposal, with residents having an opportunity to share their concerns and feedback through the public hearing process. Council will then vote on the matter.