

# Thurston County Home Elevation Grant

Sponsored by the Chehalis Flood Authority and the Washington State  
Recreation and Conservation Office

September 20, 2018

# Purpose

Thurston County conducted a local home elevation pilot project focused on reducing impacts to structures from flooding. The purpose of the pilot is to document processes, procedures and lessons learned to implement an efficient and effective home elevation program that benefits homeowners, agencies, and business interests. The goal was to use this process to elevate as many repetitive loss homes in the Chehalis Basin as possible.

# How we prepared

- ▶ Identified list of projects that would qualify for repetitive loss
- ▶ Met and briefed internal staff on the grant and potential projects
- ▶ Established a review process that streamlined these projects and arranged for reimbursement in a timely manner
- ▶ Worked with inspectors so that they were familiar with the projects and expectations. Also requested that they take photos during the construction
- ▶ Prior to final inspection, recorded non-conversion notice on property

# What we did

- ▶ Received signed letters from homeowners agreeing to their project and the funding
- ▶ Had a list of qualified contractors for homeowners to choose from
- ▶ Contract for work is with the homeowner not the County
- ▶ Required flood elevation certificates pre and post project to ensure meeting minimum elevations
- ▶ Use one inspector for all projects
- ▶ Documented through photos, progress and inspection reports
- ▶ After final inspection, required a non conversion document to be signed and recorded on the property.

# Results and Benefits

- ▶ Successfully elevated 3 homes
- ▶ Reduced cost of flood insurance for the 3 home owners
- ▶ Added points to our CRS program. Currently flood insurance for homeowners in Thurston County is reduced by 40% base on our Class This type of action supports that Class level.
- ▶ Reduced or eliminated emergency responder needs in case of flooding emergency.
- ▶ Removed both property owners and professional rescue personnel from hazardous situation. Saved lives
- ▶ Reduced flood emergency costs for the County

# Lessons learned

- ▶ Internal coordination was critical. Even with the early work we did with permit review staff, there were some delays, particularly in getting payments processed. Making sure that there are specific contact people for moving the invoices through helped address those issues.
- ▶ When considering this type of project, ensure that you have, or can include licensed contractors with this specific type of knowledge and experience on your list. Building a good relationship and trust with the contractor and property owner helped the communication process during construction.
- ▶ It was extremely beneficial to have the flood administrator and an experienced building inspector familiar with the property owners and the type of work that would be needed to elevate. Having confidence in the contractor selected, as well as a proactive inspector, resulted in minimal corrections needed during construction.
- ▶ Ensure that you are constructing to 2-3 feet above the highest flood of record. This can include seeking the property owners own data and photos if there is a question about site specific elevation of previous flood water. Use all your data to establish this elevation.

# Lessons learned

- ▶ During scope, check to ensure that the large and heavy equipment needed can access the property. Limited weight bridges, narrow driveways, etc. can add costs or require alternate access.
- ▶ Coordinate with internal permitting staff so that when the applications come in they are routed to the same person. This streamlines the permit process and give consistent information through the process. This effort also alerted other departments who needed to review the proposal such as Environmental Health.
- ▶ Coordinate with staff prior to finalizing contracts how, and who will handle the invoices to be processed. Many contractors need funding up front to do the work and having to wait for an invoice to find the right person can delay getting that invoice paid in a timely manner.
- ▶ The home owners should have a lower flood insurance rate as a result of the project. They will get a discount depending on your CRS rating, and should get an additional discount due to the elevation.

# Questions?

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