

Jefferson-Chalmers WATER Project

Water Access, Technology, Education and Recreation

Keep Sewage out of Basements & Canals • Keep Stormwater out of the System • Keep Great Lakes out of the Neighborhood

FLOOD PROTECTION FACT SHEET

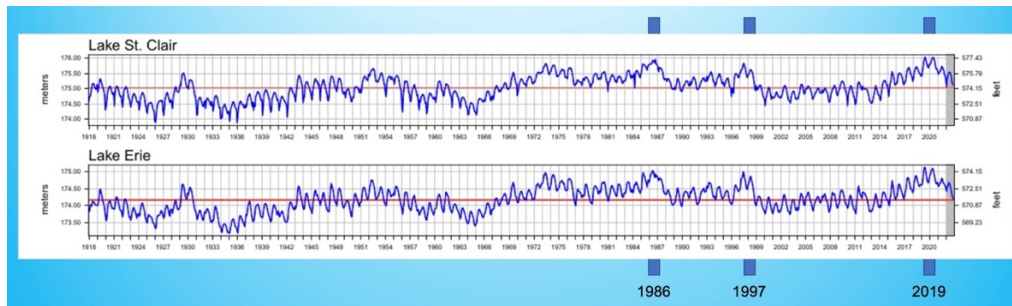
Summary – The designation of the FEMA 100-Year Floodplain in the Jefferson-Chalmers is a complex matter. Removing the designation will be both difficult and expensive. This Fact Sheet is intended to provide community residents and stakeholders with more detailed information to help guide their understanding, while also assisting them in opposing the City’s \$20 million proposal to build stop logs in all three canals in the southeast corner of the community and a flood wall on Clairpointe at the entry to KAM Marine and Bayview Yacht Club.

Establishing/Defining a Floodplain – A floodplain is an area of land adjacent to a river or stream that is subject to flooding during periods of high water. In the decade before establishing the floodplain, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed a Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) Study which examines “the movement of water, including the volume and rate of flow as it moves through a watershed, basin, channel, or man-made structure.” The calculations and analytics served as the basis for the FEMA decision prior to the designation in October 2021. The flooding in 2019 and 2020 brought the issue front-and-center, but FEMA’s decision was not based upon those events.



Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are maps that delineate flood risk zones, used by FEMA and lenders to determine flood insurance requirements and rates. Even though FEMA modified both in October 2021, Floodplains and FIRMs are NOT the same.

Flooding History – It takes approximately five consistent years of wet weather in the *entirety* of the Great Lakes basin to cause the lake levels to rise. While the Great Lakes are generally higher than they were 100 years ago, the high-water level cycle is on a 20 to 30-year period, based upon National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (The Corps) data.



As noted, previous high lake levels were in 1997 and 1986 and according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), low ice cover leads to lower lake levels because reduced ice allows for increased evaporation. In February 2024, NOAA noted that Lakes Erie and Ontario

were at historic lows, not seen this low since 1973. In the four (4) years between 2019-2022, NOAA’s Windmill Pointe Station (ID #: 9044049) reported the lake levels noted at right. In reality, the next time the community might experience the threat from high Great Lakes levels is 2045.

NAVD	Days
577’ or Above	14%
576.5’ – 577’	54%
576’ or Below	32%

Role of The Corps – Under specific Congressional Authority, commonly known as Section 206, The Corps can provide professional and technical support to local communities to “promote prudent use and management of the Nation’s floodplains.” The City invited The Corps to provide technical assistance through their Floodplain Management Services Program (FPMS) that resulted in their report, published in July 2022. The controversial report included three (3) options ranging in cost between \$161-170 million and all would have limited water access in some way.

Separate and distinct from their Section 206 authority, The Corps also has regulatory authority to review and approve permits under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for construction in navigable waterways, including Fox Creek, Conner Creek, Grayhaven and all of the linked canals that together make up the nearly 10 miles of shoreline in the Jefferson-Chalmers community.

The State’s Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) also has jurisdiction over construction in inland waterways and streams under Part 301 of Public Act 451 and works with The Corps to jointly issue permits for these activities. Neither The Corps nor EGLE have the authority to dictate shoreline height or materials used. And neither agency conducts an inspection during or after the completion of the work associated with the permit.

Shoreline Resilience – The key reasons the floodplain designation was established by FEMA were vulnerable shoreline and inadequate topographical elevations along numerous waterfront properties that are inadequate to protect the Jefferson-Chalmers community from future high Great Lakes levels. Shoreline infrastructure investments are the best and least expensive method to remove the FEMA designation, which will only occur when that work is complete.

Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) – Each year, the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) allocates between \$30-40 million to the City of Detroit. This flexible source of funds can be used for a wide range of activities including home repair programs, street improvements and building demolition. Following the declaration of a National Disaster, Congress appropriates a special allocation to disaster impacted communities. Detroit received \$57.6 million of CDBG-DR for the June 2021 storm (MI-4607) and that special allocation was supplemented with \$37.6 million and another \$346.8 million linked to the August 2023 event (MI-4757).

Consistent with HUD requirements, the City develops a Consolidated Plan for its annual allocation of CDBG and must develop an Action Plan to determine the use of the DR funds. Using funds to mitigate hazards is allowed under HUD's regulations. The proposed \$20 million project for stop logs and flood walls is not linked to the August 2023 event and does not have to be.

Flood Protection Project – Working with engineering professionals, [The WATER Project](#) has determined the cost to achieve shoreline resilience and flood protection to be **\$41.25 million**. This includes a **parcel-by-parcel focused solution with a variety of alternatives** such as natural shoreline, rip-rap and appropriate sized seawalls that will create a single line of defense of future Great Lakes and CSO discharges while also **ensuring unrestricted access to the water everywhere 24/7/365** – no temporary or permanent closures (stop logs, flood gates, flood walls) of any kind. In order to advance this concept, [The WATER Project](#) secured a \$1M appropriation from the State Legislature while working with Councilwoman Johnson to ensure the funds are used for their intended purpose – to assist low-income property owners in improving their shoreline.



Timeline of Activities

- Summer 2019 – High water levels in Great Lakes cause flooding in community; sand bags installed
- August 2019 – City requests assistance from The Corps
- Summer 2020 – High water levels in Great Lakes cause flooding in community; Tiger Dams installed
- June 2021 – Catastrophic storm; GLWA pump failures; street flooding; CSO volume overtops seawalls; basement back-ups; destruction of tiger dams – National Disaster Declaration MI-4607
- May 2022 – Draft Floodplain Management Services (FPMS) Report presentation to the community
- July 2022 – Final FPMS published by The Corps
- October 4, 2022 - Initial CDBG-DR Draft Action Plan - \$57.6 million, includes Jefferson-Chalmers Flood Protection
- October 11, 2022 – Community meeting rejecting the CDBG-DR Draft Action Plan
- October 12, 2022 – City officials on record abandoning stop logs and flood wall plan (Detroit News)
- November 2022 – Final CDBG-DR Action Plan deletes \$10M for Jefferson-Chalmers Flood Protection
- Fall 2022 – Summer 2023 – Sand bags removed
- March 2023 – WATER Project publishes Engineering Study
- June 2023 – State Legislature appropriates \$1M for flood protection
- Spring/Summer 2023 – Tiger dams removed
- August 2023 – Severe storms; flooding; basement back-ups - National Disaster Declaration MI-4757
- May 2024 – Substantial Amendment #1 for \$37.6 million Draft Action Plan Public Comment
- February 2025 – Draft Action Plan for \$346.8 million CDBG-DR funds

To learn more about FEMA's H&H visit:

https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/www.sog.unc.edu/files/general_media/FEMA%20HH%20Study%20Quick%20Guide%28Final%29.pdf

To learn more, visit www.jeffersonchalmerswaterproject.org – Page 1 – **Public Responsibility for Flood Protection** as well as numerous studies, including The Corps' **Floodplain Management Study** and **Engineering Report** on Page 3.