

MORRIS COUNTY FLOOD MITIGATION PROGRAM

Mike DiGiulio, CFM, Program Coordinator
e-mail: mdigiulio@co.morris.nj.us
phone: (973) 829-8120

❖ What are the main objectives of the Flood Mitigation Program?

- To move people out of harm's way
- Lower municipal costs created by intense flooding episodes
- Create open space that acts as a natural, sustainable flood capture and storage area
- Protect remaining homes and businesses by creating a flood barrier with this preserved land

❖ Can you give a brief overview of how the Program is structured?

Morris County works directly with the Municipality to provide funding. There are two funding tracks:

- MATCH Program - to provide match funding for projects already underway with another agency, i.e. FEMA, or Blue Acres. In this case, Morris County is the *subordinate* funder.
- CORE program – is designed to catch homes which have fallen through the FEMA/Blue Acres net – Morris County will be the *majority* funder.

❖ Which towns are eligible to participate in the program?

- Any town in Morris County is eligible. In fact, this is an opportunity for the County's more urban communities to benefit from the Preservation Trust in a way they may not have been able to in the

past. It will provide a more equalized distribution of open space funds.

- ❖ The Flood Mitigation Program operates as an expansion of the Morris County Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund…how does that work?

  - The Preservation Trust has expanded to meet our county's needs through the years, for example the addition of Historic Preservation in 2002. The Flood Mitigation Program was created in response to a pressing need the Freeholders saw in the County. The Flood Mitigation Committee operates with a defined set of Rules and Regulations for flood mitigation acquisition specifically. The program functions independently of the three other Preservation Trust programs (Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation).

- ❖ Specifically, what are the criteria for a home to be eligible for purchase?

  - **Benefit / Cost Analysis** – the total cost to acquire the property vs. the total cost to maintain the property – has to be at least 1:1 – a financial breakeven situation demonstrating that this investment makes sense.

- ❖ How much of the total cost of a project will Morris County fund under this program, and where will the remainder come from?

  Our cost share amount depends on funding program utilized:

  - **MATCH Program –** our cost share will be 25% or less, the remaining majority of the project funding will come from FEMA or Blue Acres

  - **CORE Program –**the County will be the majority funder, up to 75% with the remainder provided by either the municipality, another funding agency, or the homeowner

- ❖ Who applies for the buyout program, the homeowner or the town?

- The Town; we only accept applications from towns because they will be the ultimate owner and steward of the property.

❖ Do I need a consultant to help me create a Flood Acquisition Plan and navigate through the acquisition process?

- No, Morris County specifically designed the Flood Mitigation Program so that the county and municipality work *directly* with each other. Morris County provides extensive support and resources which include: creation of a Flood Acquisition Plan (including mapping), development of all applications, as well as instruction and guidance throughout the acquisition process. The County strives to intentionally hold down municipal costs and receive direct input from municipalities as this new program evolves.

❖ Who reviews the buyout application and either approves or rejects it?

- Morris County staff will review applications for eligibility and then present qualified applications to the Flood Mitigation Committee. If the Committee gives Preliminary Approval, the application can then be considered for funding by the Freeholders.

❖ What will this program <u>not</u> pay for?

- We will not pay for legal or administrative costs, or other methods of flood mitigation that do not involve acquisitions; i.e. home elevations, flood walls, or dams.

❖ Is there a timeframe or a deadline by which an application must be made?

- No – applications are accepted on a continuous, rolling basis. It is anticipated that a fair number of the initial CORE applications will be those that were not funded by other agencies. This is a big difference from the Morris County "traditional" Open Space Program which has specific, annual funding rounds.

❖ Can you please explain the approval process?

- Given the complexity of these projects, approval will occur in two steps. Once County staff deems the application eligible, it is presented to the Flood Mitigation Committee and in turn the Freeholders for **Preliminary Approval** for an estimated lump-sum dollar amount for a given Project Area based on current home values.

- Towns then proceed with their due diligence: appraisals, surveys, etc. Once they have executed a sales contract with the homeowner, they bring the confirmed cost of the acquisition back to the Committee and the Freeholders for **Final Approval** of homes to be purchased, on an individual basis.

❖ Do you have any idea how many properties may qualify for this program?

- A key requirement of the CORE Program is a Flood Acquisition Plan (FLAP), which will help us find that answer at the specific community level. That said we won't truly know that a property qualifies until a Town makes an application to the Program.

For more information, please contact:

Virginia Michelin, CFM, Program Coordinator
e-mail: vmichelin@co.morris.nj.us
phone: (973) 829-8120

https://planning.morriscountynj.gov/flood/