

Floodplain Terminology

Reference Document

FLOODPLAIN: Also called “Special Flood Hazard Area.”

The relatively flat or lowland area adjoining a river, watercourse, lake, or other body of surface water, which has been or may be temporarily covered by floodwater. For administrative purposes, the floodplain is also defined as the land area inundated by the base flood as defined in the flood insurance study, or by other recognized sources.

There are different floodplain delineations for different flood events. For instance, many FEMA maps show a 500-year floodplain (1/500 chance of occurrence/exceedance). Many local floodplain maps will show a 10-year (1/10 chance of occurrence/exceedance) floodplain. For regulatory purposes, the 100-year is the primary floodplain of concern. The 100-year (1/100 chance of occurrence/exceedance) flood is also referred to as the “Base Flood”.

Important Note: in areas of urban development, often times portions of stream flows are put into storm sewer pipe to allow the construction of roadways, homes, stores, parking lots, etc on top. The flows in excess of the pipe’s capacity will still flow on the surface, and there may no longer be a stream channel there. As a result, the floodplain may be on a roadway or other surface, and not recognizable as a “creek”. This is the case in a number of locations in Littleton.

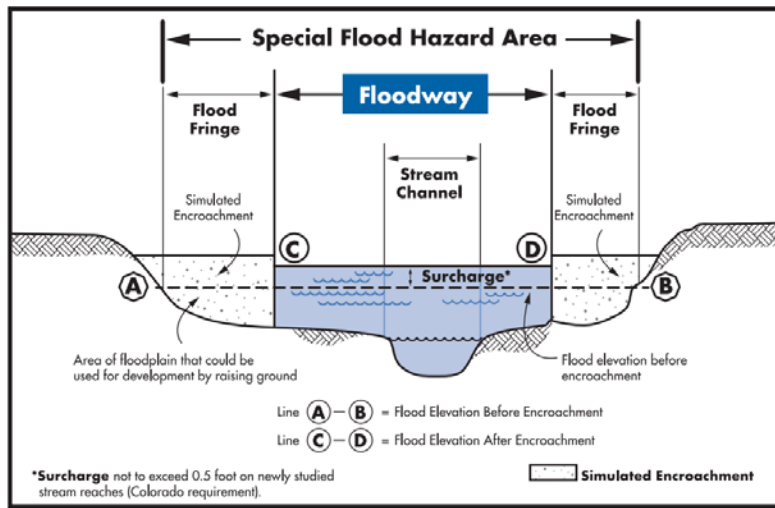
FLOODWAY:

That portion of a floodplain that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood (100-year flood) without a cumulative increase in the water surface elevation more than one-half foot (0.5') for newly studied reaches or due to new development. Previously studied reaches and letters of map revisions to existing floodway delineations may continue to use the floodway criteria in place at the time of the existing floodway delineation (FEMA standard is 1.0' surcharge).

Important Note: Not all mapped floodplains have mapped Floodways. A Floodway analysis is another element of a hydraulic study that is not always conducted. It is not uncommon to not have a Floodway delineation. A number of floodplains in Littleton do not have Floodways.

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Understanding the Floodway

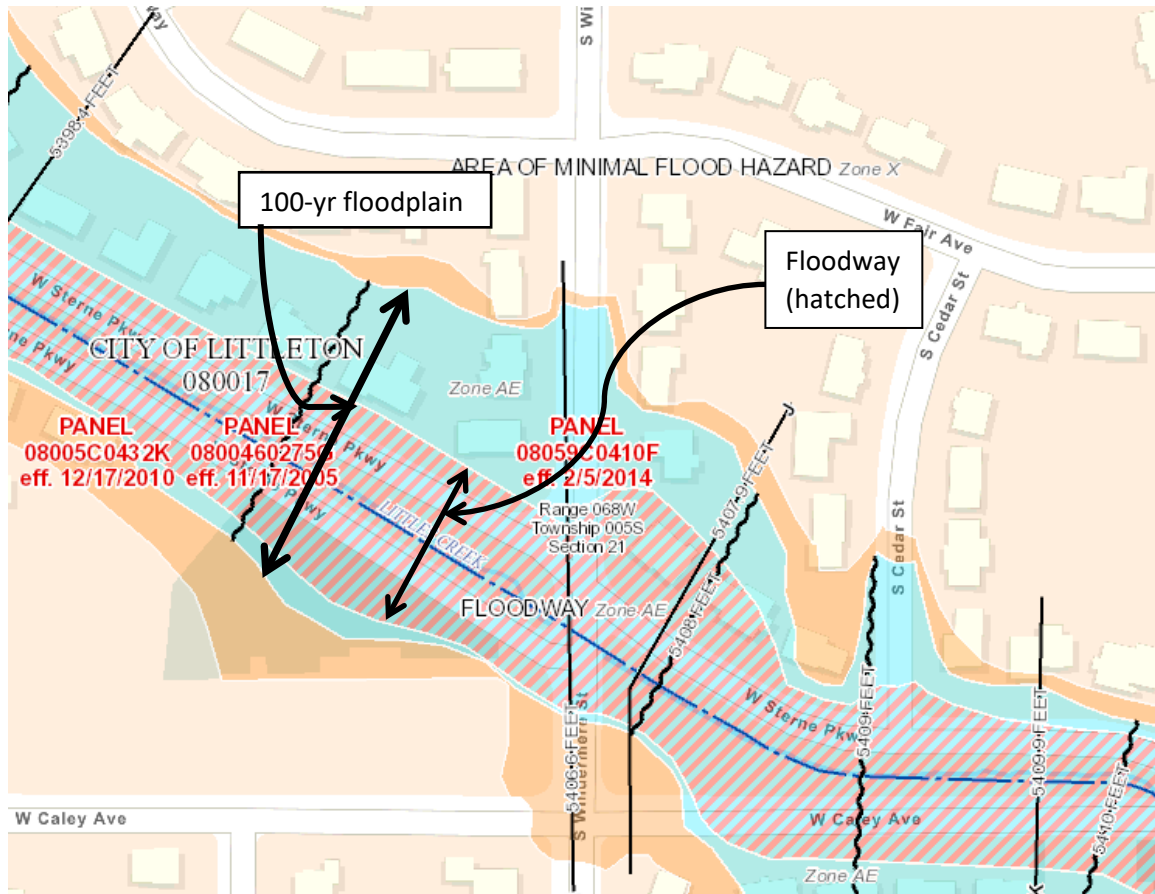


Terms and Definitions

The **Floodway** is the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to pass the base flood discharge without increasing flood depths.

Computer models of the floodplain are used to simulate "encroachment" or fill in the flood fringe in order to predict where and how much the base flood elevation would increase if the floodplain is allowed to be filled.

Floodplain (Special Flood Hazard Area) and Floodway – Cross Section view



Floodplain and Floodway – Map View