

Report
Stormwater Drainage Advisory and Hazard Mitigation Advisory Board
to
City of Tulsa Mayor and City Council
concerning
Floodplain Management of the Arkansas River Corridor at Tulsa
Dec. 17, 2013

Findings of Fact

In November 2013, the City of Tulsa Stormwater Drainage and Hazard Mitigation Advisory Board convened an Arkansas River Technical Task Force to study the complex issues relating to river development and asked the Task Force to provide technical guidance and recommendations to the Board. Task Force members include Charles L. Hardt and Michael L. Buchert, former City of Tulsa Public Works Director and Assistant Director; Ray Jordan, retired Tulsa County Engineer; and Sue Haslett, retired planning chief for the Tulsa District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Other technical experts are also ex officio members.

The Task Force has reviewed documents and interviewed other key experts about the river issues, and finds that the City of Tulsa and Tulsa County adopted the 2005 Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan and are considering implementing part of the plan in relation to low-water dams but have not implemented the part of the corridor plan that contains floodplain management safeguards. Those safeguards are intended to be the foundation for any actions to implement construction portions of the corridor plan.

The Task Force returned to the Board on Dec. 17, 2013, with the three key recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on the recommendations of the SDHMAD's Arkansas River Technical Task Force, the Board recommends the following to Mayor and City Council:

1. Concerning the regulatory standard for floodplain management along the Arkansas River corridor throughout the City of Tulsa: In addition to its existing floodplain regulations, the City of Tulsa should adopt ordinances implementing the floodplain management recommendations contained in the 2005 Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan (pages 209-211). Those recommendations include requiring building construction at a height of one foot above the 1986 flood event (307,800 cubic feet per second) with zero rise to the 100-year floodplain and allowing the same conveyance for flood water. Facilities that are critical to the health and welfare of the general population should not be located in the 500-year floodplain. (Critical facilities include nursing homes, shelters, police and fire stations, and hospitals.)

2. Concerning the corridor plan's recommendations for planning and engineering studies: The City of Tulsa should fund and implement additional planning and engineering studies along the Arkansas River, including development of a corridor master drainage plan; should develop and carry out extensive citizen education and engagement programs to help the public understand the river risks and how to mitigate those risks; and should work in partnership with other entities such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

3. Concerning the water quality in the Arkansas River at Tulsa: The City of Tulsa should work in partnership with others including Tulsa County and the Indian Nations Council of Governments to increase water-quality monitoring in the river if or when low-water dams are constructed. This expanded monitoring program should be coordinated with other jurisdictions who share the river in Tulsa County, with management responsibility clearly assigned to one entity with enforcement authority to require changes in facility management protocols when needed to protect the quality of water in the river.

The Task Force will consider additional issues in subsequent meetings during the coming weeks.

The board stands ready to assist the City of Tulsa in any possible way to assure the health, safety, and welfare of those who live, work, and travel through the Arkansas River corridor at Tulsa.

Approved:
Stormwater Drainage and Hazard Mitigation Advisory Board
Dec. 17, 2013

Dr. Judith Finn, Board Chair