

City to map popular south-end neighbourhoods for flood risks

VITO PILIECI ([HTTPS://OTTAWACITIZEN.COM/AUTHOR/VPILIECISBITSANDBYTESBLOG](https://ottawacitizen.com/author/vpilieci/sbitsandbytesblog)) Updated: June 4, 2019

The City of Ottawa has partnered with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority to update flood maps in neighbourhoods throughout the city's booming south end.

According to Ferdous Ahmed, senior water resources engineer with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA), the new mapping initiative is Phase 2 of a multi-year plan. The first phase of that plan, which took place between 2012 and this year, saw the conservation authority partner with other organizations in order to update flood mapping along parts of

the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers that are further north. Now that those areas have been taken care of, the focus is shifting further south.

The RVCA is focusing on flood mapping areas along Mud Creek in Manotick, Stevens Creek in North Gower, Mosquito Creek in Riverside South and Monahan Drain in Kanata South.

“Current mapping in these areas is outdated or non-existent, making it difficult to ensure public safety, protect property and make sound planning decisions,” Ahmed said.

Funding for the new flood mapping is being provided by the City of Ottawa. The results of the mapping are expected to be included in the city’s new Official Plan, which it is beginning to lay out this year. The results of the mapping will be used to help development boundaries for developers as well as zoning in those areas.

Many of the areas targeted for the flood mapping are some of the fastest growing neighbourhoods in the city. In February, Riverside South Development Corporation, which is a partnership between Urbandale and Richcraft, put forth a plan to build 1,350 homes in the community, while Claridge announced intentions to build 737 homes nearby. In October, Minto released plans to increase the number of homes in its Mahogany development in Manotick by as many as 900 new units.

The announcement of the flood mapping comes just after Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson sent letters to both the federal and provincial governments, requesting that they carry out an investigation into the causes of both the 2017 and 2019 floods along the Ottawa River.

Flood mapping has become an incredibly contentious topic as mapping flood risk can reduce property values in flood-prone areas where infrastructure solutions aren’t feasible. They also could see municipalities held liable for damages in cases where development is allowed within a newly discovered flood-prone area.

Slobodan Simonovic belongs to a research group at Western University called the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction, which looks for ways to reduce the impact of tornadoes, floods, earthquakes and other disasters. Simonovic said that mapping flood plains, especially in areas that are near water, needs to be completed and updated on a regular

basis. Changes in the climate and alterations to the land through construction (pavement helps water to run off faster), increased urban density, and other factors, all dictate how much water will be traveling through a waterway.

Simonovic said individuals take great pride in buying a piece of waterfront property or land near a river, and then building a home on that property with their own money. However when a flood occurs various levels of government assistance, paid for by taxpayers, are mobilized to help protect that property. When the flood is finished, insurance companies are then expected to restore that property.

“We should be leaving the space for the river. I know that land along the river is very popular and you have lots of expensive properties that are being built there, but you have to understand that there is considerable change coming from the climate,” he said. “You have a situation where municipalities are much more lenient to the interpretation of the rules, and there are also large taxes that they can catch from these expensive properties, but when the flood comes and the damages occur then the responsibility moves and we all pay for that.”

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