



Department of ~~Public Works and Engineering~~
Planning & Development Services Division

Floodplain Management Office

Frequently Asked Questions about: Substantial Improvements

What is a Substantial Improvement?

Chapter 19-~~2~~ states "substantial improvement" shall mean any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure, before the start of the construction of the improvement.

Why is it important to know if the improvement is "substantial"?

Per Chapter 19-~~33 or 19-43~~, substantial improvements will require the **ENTIRE** structure to be brought into compliance with Chapter 19 regulations, not just the proposed improvement.

Can I still get a development permit for a Substantial Improvement?

Yes, as stated above, the **ENTIRE** structure will have to be brought into compliance with Chapter 19 regulations.

Does it matter if the property is in the floodway or floodplain?

No. Substantial improvement determines whether the **ENTIRE** structure must be brought into compliance with the Chapter 19 requirements for floodplain or floodway.

Can cumulative improvements to my structure qualify as a substantial improvement?

No. With the revisions to Chapter 19 ~~effective 2009~~, cumulative improvements to structures do not trigger substantial improvements.

Who determines the market value of my structure?

The market value of the structure may be documented by the respective County Appraisal Districts, the FEMA Residential Substantial Damage Estimator (RSDE), a TALCB certified real estate appraiser or other methods approved by the City Engineer.

For fees and more information, contact the City of Houston Floodplain Management Office (FMO) at (832) 394-8854, ~~come by the~~ FMO at 1002 Washington Avenue or ~~check out the Floodplain Information on the web~~ at http://www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/notices/flood_plain_guidelines.html