



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## MWRD and partners break ground on transformative project to protect Robbins from flooding

After years of community engagement, partner development and planning, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), village of Robbins, and other local, state, and federal officials put shovels into the ground to begin the journey that will help mitigate local flooding, restore Midlothian Creek and create opportunities to strengthen and revitalize Robbins, Illinois. On August 12, the MWRD and Village were joined by U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, the Cook County Board of Commissioners, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), OAI and other partners to mark the occasion. Watch the ceremony at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1en85gho0VM>

“This is a model project for collaboration and engagement and demonstrates the potential of what can be accomplished when we address stormwater management and how it can lead to any number of community improvements,” said MWRD Commissioner Chakena D. Perry.

“The Robbins Stormwater Park and Midlothian Creek restoration project will increase the existing stormwater drainage system, mitigate flooding for homes and businesses and strengthen the community in myriad ways,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

Stormwater improvements will extend along Midlothian Creek and east of Kedzie Avenue from around 139th Street on the south to the Cal-Sag Channel on the north. The first phase of the project involves the establishment of a diversion channel. A culvert will be constructed under 135th Street, where the diversion channel will connect to a stormwater pond. Three drop structures will control flow from the stormwater pond to the diversion channel and Cal-Sag Channel. Stone armoring will be installed along the diversion channel waterline.



MWRD Commissioner Chakena D. Perry and Executive Director Brian A. Perkovich joined U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District Commander Col. Paul Culberson, Robbins Mayor Darren E. Bryant, village trustees and partners to signal the beginning of construction on the Robbins Stormwater Park and Midlothian Creek Restoration Project.

“This project is just the latest example of the important work that MWRD is doing all around our region to help address flooding in historically underserved communities,” U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said. “Beyond providing critical drainage for the area, it also will promote green infrastructure, improve local water quality, and improve the quality of life for residents of Robbins by adding hiking and biking trails and open park space. This project will make Robbins a better place to raise a family and attract further housing and economic development. I’m glad to have played a part in helping ensure MWRD has the funding it needs to begin this project by pushing the Army Corps of Engineers to provide \$12 million in federal reimbursed funds to MWRD. And I will continue working with MWRD, the project partners, and the Illinois delegation to ensure that more reimbursed funds come back to MWRD to complete this important project.”

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## MWRD and partners break ground to protect Robbins, *cont.*



MWRD Commissioner Chakena D. Perry, Sen. Dick Durbin (above) and Robbins Mayor Darren E. Bryant (right) have showed instrumental support to move the Robbins stormwater management project forward.

As construction of the diversion channel is underway, work will begin on the second phase, which includes a stormwater park and pond and conveyance improvements along Midlothian Creek. The MWRD will stabilize 2,200 linear feet of streambank along Midlothian Creek, controlling erosion by cutting back both banks and providing a stable slope that features native plants appropriate to the moisture and soil conditions. The 18-acre flood-control pond will be constructed east of Kedzie between 135th and 137th streets and north of Midlothian Creek. The Robbins Stormwater Park will allow for a naturalized wetland detention area along with channel improvements to resemble a park-like setting in central Robbins.

“The development of the Robbins Stormwater Park serves as an impactful piece to the Village of Robbins,” said Robbins Mayor Darren E. Bryant. “As a result, hundreds of Robbins homeowners will get relief from paying flood insurance, the floodplain in Robbins will get mitigated for the next 100 years, and green infrastructure will get created to help spur economic and recreational development. Thank you to the leadership of MWRD President Steele, commissioners, and staff alongside many other partners who played crucial roles in seeing this project through.”

Bioswales will be planted along Spaulding and Sawyer Avenues from 137th to 139th streets, capturing stormwater runoff. A rain garden will also be installed in the 138th Street right-of-way between Sawyer and Kedzie



avenues to absorb more runoff from the bioswales and surrounding area before it can discharge into Midlothian Creek. The rain garden will create more than two acres of bioretention, collecting runoff and other contaminants before it can reach the creek.

The estimated construction cost of the two phases is \$20 million, and costs are covered by the MWRD with support from Cook County via Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Chi-Cal Rivers Fund.

The Robbins Stormwater Park and Midlothian Creek restoration will increase the existing stormwater drainage system from less than a 5-year storm level of protection to a 100-year level of service. As a result, the project will remove approximately 140 acres from the flood plain, protect 92 structures and remove more than 1,300 parcels from the 100-year floodplain. The *(continued)*



## MWRD and partners break ground to protect Robbins, *cont.*

project will also bring about increased awareness for the watershed, provide critical drainage for an area with no existing stormwater infrastructure, promote green infrastructure and maintenance, improve local water quality and attract further housing, transportation, recreation and economic development opportunities.

“We are thrilled that the day has come to celebrate the opening of the MWRD’s Robbins Stormwater Park, a beautiful oasis, designed to capture stormwater during heavy rains and serve as a sanctuary during dry periods,” said Michael Davidson, who leads the neighborhood investment work at The Chicago Community Trust. “This was no easy feat for an area notorious for flooding, but that through vision and deliberate planning has been transformed into a place that can now add real value to the community.”

“This park represents a new beginning for investment and transit-oriented development in Robbins,” CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman said. “The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning prides itself on fostering collaboration, and we are proud to have worked alongside the village and numerous partners to create a local plan that encourages investment and creates a sustainable vision for the people of Robbins.”

“OAI is pleased to be a GSI installation partner on the Robbins Stormwater Park project,” said OAI Executive Director Mollie Dowling. “Our organization is committed to fostering community partnerships, providing workforce development opportunities, and improving quality of life for all residents. This initiative represents what is possible when agencies collaborate together, work with communities, and leverage multiple funding sources.”

The Robbins Master Plan, developed by Donohue & Associates and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, received the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association’s Strategic Plan Award in 2017. Following that success, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Plan-



*Leadership and staff with the MWRD Engineering and Law departments have been working on the Robbins Stormwater Park and Midlothian Creek Restoration Project for nearly a decade, expanding opportunities, seeking out land and grant funding, and collaborating with new partners to reach the starting line of an ambitious project that will be completed in two phases.*

ning (CMAP) selected Robbins as one of 34 projects to receive planning support through the agency’s Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program to assist the community through increased livability, sustainability and economic vitality.

Partnering with the MWRD, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and village of Robbins, CMAP chose the Robbins project to implement a plan that addresses better stormwater management, increased economic development, and improved quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors to the village. The initiative also garnered a Chicago Community Trust grant that allowed engineers and planners from the MWRD and University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs to hold a series of public meetings and workshops with Robbins residents to envision how the Robbins park could provide recreation and a critical tool to combat flooding.

Read more about the project at <https://mwrdd.org/robbins-stormwater-park-and-midlothian-creek-restoration-project>.

### *Recovering Resources, Transforming Water*

*Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at [mwrdd.org](https://mwrdd.org).*