Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

STORMWATER MASTER PLANNING

Partnering for Resilient Communities

Flooding in Des Plaines, 2008

Bioswale – green infrastructure solution to capture stormwater runoff

Program Overview

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has initiated the Stormwater Master Planning program to address urban flooding problems in Cook County, using a multi-faceted, holistic approach. Urban flooding occurs when rainfall overwhelms drainage systems in a built environment. This multi-year program will assess stormwater planning needs at the community level and support the development of stormwater management plans in flood-prone areas.

MWRD is completing a data-driven analysis to identify the priority needs and locations for stormwater management plans based on flood risk and areas in need of planning assistance. This analysis will be completed in coordination with local communities and regional agencies. For those areas identified for stormwater manangement plans, MWRD will partner with municipalities and related jurisdictions to develop these plans.

Program Goals

- Empower municipalities to reduce the risk of urban flooding for Cook County homes, businesses and critical facilities.
- Establish a methodology for municipalities to prioritize stormwater management investments.
- Facilitate partnerships among agencies and local communities to plan and implement priority stormwater management projects.

What is a Stormwater Management Plan?

Stormwater management plans will provide a community roadmap for reducing flooding and enhancing quality of life in the community. In addition to identifying potential stormwater management projects, plans could include recommendations to implement policies, adopt land use planning principles, and incorporate green infrastructure (i.e., bioswales, rain barrels, permeable pavement) into other community projects and initiatives. The recommendations would be specific for each community, based on their issues, needs, resources and co-funding options.

Program Background

Rainwater cistern

Disconnected downspout

MWRD has had authority for general supervision of stormwater management in Cook County since 2004. In 2014, MWRD's statutory authority was amended to allow the agency to acquire flood-prone properties and to assist with localized flooding issues. In 2017, MWRD completed five pilot studies to identify the types of solutions needed to protect communities from flooding up to a 100-year storm event. Based on lessons learned from these studies, MWRD established the Stormwater Master Planning program. This program will continue to evaluate stormwater management needs throughout the county and assist priority flood-prone areas with developing master plans, based on flood risk and areas in need of planning assistance.

Why is it important for my community to participate?

These stormwater management plans will provide communities with a comprehensive framework to address local flooding problems and enhance community resilience. Solutions will be tailored to the needs of each community. Participation will be key to ensure that local needs and priorities inform the development of potential projects and programs. Robust participation during the planning process will lay the foundation for communities to successfully implement future projects.

Permeable pavement parking lot

An important focus of this program is identifying potential partnerships and federal, state and regional funding programs that can help communities implement future stormwater projects. By actively participating in the planning process, communities will be well positioned to pursue possible funding opportunities. Please contact the MWRD program managers for additional information.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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