

Questions and Answers: City of Harvey Stormwater Management Project

The City of Harvey, Illinois, in conjunction with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), has applied for funding through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant to help alleviate flooding in the city. FEMA is currently reviewing the project application and estimates awarding funds by the end of 2024. The actual award date depends on several factors, some of which are beyond FEMA's control.

In January and February 2024, FEMA mailed a circular to addresses within the project area to provide information about the project and solicit feedback from the public. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document responds to common questions that have been received since the circular was mailed and provides updates on the project review steps.

The circular and this FAQ are posted on FEMA's website at: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa/environmental-assessment-city-harvey>.

What is the purpose of this project?

- The purpose of the proposed project is to reduce flood hazards and flood damage as well as improve stormwater drainage for the City of Harvey by constructing a 23 acre-feet naturalized stormwater detention basin along Myrtle Avenue between 153rd and 154th Streets, constructing new storm sewers throughout the project area, and implementing localized storm sewer improvements. The detention pond is envisioned to be a component of a new future community park which will be developed with green infrastructure best management practices to further reduce flooding and promote water quality. The new community park is not included in or part of the proposed project scope of work described above, nor is it being funded by FEMA.

Why is the project needed?

- The project is needed because the City of Harvey currently has a combined sewer system that often gets overrun during heavy rain events. A combined sewer system collects and conveys both stormwater runoff and sanitary sewer flows into a single pipe where it travels to a wastewater treatment plant. During heavy rain events, the combined sewer system becomes overwhelmed by excess water. The resulting hazards and damage include sewer backups into basements, property damage resulting from overland flow into buildings, and nuisance street and yard flooding. The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the City of Harvey shows a large portion of the City is located within the 1-Percent-Annual-Chance floodplain extent. These combined factors increase the need to address flood hazards within the City of Harvey.

How will the project be funded?

- FEMA will provide 70% of the project funds through the BRIC grant program. The MWRD will provide a non-federal share of 30 percent of total project costs. Federal funds are not being used to acquire properties in the proposed detention pond location.



Why was a detention pond with sewer line upgrades selected as the most effective flood mitigation strategy for the City of Harvey?

- The MWRD hired a consultant to study a 2.4-square-mile area within the City of Harvey to evaluate existing flood conditions. As a result of the study, three potential measures were identified: stormwater conveyance, stormwater storage, and a hybrid of both stormwater conveyance and storage. The option of both stormwater conveyance and storage was determined to provide the most benefits to the community.

Bioswales and rain gardens are both effective green infrastructure solutions but would not adequately address Harvey's flooding because they are smaller and shallower in depth than traditional surface detention ponds, which results in less volume of storage for large rain events.

Backflow valves help prevent combined sewers that are overwhelmed by storm events from backing up into basements, but do not address overland flooding issues. They also impact the property owners who must maintain them.

Why was the selected block on Myrtle Street chosen as the detention pond location as opposed to other sites that would not require displacement, such as the Dixie Square Mall site or the Lowell-Longfellow School site?

- The area bounded by 152nd Street on the north, Center Street on the east, 154th Street on the south, and Wood Street on the west was one of the areas identified during the study for a potential detention basin. This location is one of the areas in Harvey where significant flooding occurs repeatedly. The basin needs to be located in the general area of Myrtle Avenue between 153rd and 154th Streets to allow flow by gravity into the Illinois Department of Transportation's Wood Street storm sewer system.

The MWRD and its consultant worked to identify City-owned and vacant parcels to locate the detention basin. The study did not find any alternative locations within the project area that will achieve the same flood control benefits which would not require some residents to be relocated.

Moving the project to the Dixie Square Mall or Lowell-Longfellow School site would not relieve flooding in the project area identified above. Also, due to utility conflicts, existing topography of the area, and other technical reasons, neither site would be a suitable location to address flooding in the project area.

What safety measures are included in the detention pond design to ensure the safety of residents and visitors from potential hazards?

- The detention basin will have a shallow water safety shelf around the perimeter. The safety shelf is 10 feet wide and approximately 1 foot deep when the basin is at its normal water level. The MWRD will also incorporate other safety measures into the design as necessary to ensure the public's safety.

What resources are available to property owners and residents within the proposed detention pond area?

- The MWRD is working with a relocation consultant to offer relocation assistance and advisory services to impacted property owners and residents. Since acquisition is not being funded by the BRIC grant, FEMA cannot answer questions about relocation assistance. Impacted residents with questions about relocation assistance should contact Relocation Specialist Kim Polk at (708) 374-8539 or kbpolk7@gmail.com.

What is the status of the Federal Environmental review?

- In accord with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FEMA has determined the project will require a formal Environmental Assessment. The Environmental Assessment must include an evaluation of project alternatives and a discussion of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Currently, FEMA does not anticipate any impacts to endangered species or wetlands.

What impacts will the project have on Historic or Cultural Resources in the project area?

- The project will require a formal consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. FEMA is currently evaluating the proposed project and will be issuing a finding to the SHPO.

What is FEMA's responsibility to review this project for compliance with Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898?

- FEMA considers environmental justice (EJ) impacts as required by [Executive Order 12898](#). The executive order directs federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income and minority populations.

FEMA complies with Executive Order 12898 by reviewing a proposed project to identify the presence of low-income and/or minority populations that could be affected by the project. FEMA then analyzes if those populations/communities would bear any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects from the project's implementation.

FEMA has determined an Environmental Assessment (EA) is necessary to review this project for compliance with Executive Order 12898.

Public Participation

FEMA strongly encourages public participation during the review of this proposed project. Options for providing feedback include mail, email, and voicemail via the contact information shared below.

Duane Castaldi

Regional Environmental Officer FEMA Region 5
Department of Homeland Security
536 South Clark Street, 6th floor
Chicago IL 60605
fema-r5-environmental@fema.dhs.gov
Voicemail: 312-408-5549

Mitchell Troup

Hazard Mitigation Division FEMA Region 5
Department of Homeland Security
536 South Clark Street, 6th floor
Chicago IL 60605
Mitchell.Troup@fema.dhs.gov
Voicemail: 202-717-0562

Zachary Krug

Hazard Mitigation Section Manager
Illinois Emergency Management Agency
1035 Outer Park
Springfield, IL 62704-4462
Zachary.Krug@illinois.gov
Phone: 217-524-6513

Corean Davis

15320 Broadway Avenue
Harvey, IL 60426
cdavis@cityofharveyil.gov
Phone: 708-210-5300

Daniel Walsh

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
111 E. Erie
Chicago, IL 60611
WalshD@mwrdd.org
Phone: 312-751-3079