



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

June 12, 2017

New pilot program will work to prevent basement backups on South Side

A new program launched by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and the city of Chicago will create an exciting pilot project to assess different methods of flood prevention on the South Side.

The MWRD has committed to contributing up to \$400,000 toward the pilot study that will evaluate potential runoff reduction and flood protection alternatives at approximately 40 homes in the Chatham neighborhood. Through the program, low-cost improvements, such as downspout disconnection and extension, rain gardens, check valves and backflow preventers will be installed and monitored. After at least 18 months of research, the MWRD and other stormwater experts can better assess the effectiveness of these different technologies all aimed at reducing basement backups and flooding.

Through an existing grant with the city, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) RainReady program will coordinate project outreach, provide insight and work to build flood solutions with various homeowners, while contractors hired by the city, as well as through their green job training program known as Greencorps, will have the opportunity to install these flooding remedies.

"The Chatham study represents a significant opportunity to determine how we can work together with the city and local homeowners to find an effective and affordable solution to basement backups and the devastation of flooding in our homes," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We are excited to contribute to this project and learn how we can protect our communities."

Technologies deployed by stormwater experts will vary from each home chosen to participate in the study. CNT will conduct the property inspections, recommend appropriate flood control technologies, and implement a monitoring program that includes post-installation surveys. CNT will also procure plumbing contractors to install the selected flood protection devices with the agreement of the homeowners. Greencorps

Chicago, in coordination with CNT, will install the runoff reduction systems.

Before approving the legislation to fund the project at the MWRD Board of Commissioners' June 1 meeting, Vice President Barbara McGowan recommended an amendment to require that construction contracts paid with District funds must comply with the District's Purchasing Act, the Multi-Party Labor Agreement, and the District's Affirmative Action Ordinance. The legislation, along with the amendment, were unanimously approved by the full Board.

"The District's Executive Director, David St. Pierre, took the lead for over two years in working with the Board of Commissioners, the city of Chicago and other community partners to bring this pilot project to fruition," said Vice President McGowan. "Given the history of flooding in this area, we look forward to its success so we can broaden the area of flood relief."

"I'm excited about this project and understand firsthand the chronic urban flooding that affects this area," said Commissioner Kari K. Steele, Vice Chairman of the Stormwater Management Committee. Commissioner Steele further commented that not only would the project reduce basement backups, but it would also "take pressure off of the local sewer lines, and serve as a model for other neighborhoods that experience urban flooding across the Chicagoland area".

The city has agreed to contribute a maximum of \$200,000 toward the implementation of the pilot study, covering the administrative costs incurred by CNT and Greencorps Chicago. Any remaining funds will go toward installation costs. The MWRD will reimburse the city for the installation costs of eligible flood control technologies, up to \$400,000.

Following selection of participating properties, installation of runoff reduction and flood protection systems will be completed by the end of 2017, with monitoring efforts to follow.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.