

Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project Executive Summary

Imagine: you and your family are waiting out a tornado warning in the safety of your basement when suddenly heavy rains produce flash flooding and floodwaters start pouring in around you. **Your choice: do you stay in your flooding basement or go upstairs and risk the tornado?** Unfortunately, Bee Branch Watershed residents have been faced with this dire situation repeatedly.

The Bee Branch Watershed, which includes Dubuque’s most developed areas where over 50% of Dubuque’s residents either live or work, is continually hit hard with flash flooding – and it’s NOT just a little water in the basement. **It’s flooding that inundates water heaters, furnaces, and electrical boxes; it rushes down streets from curb to curb -- stalling vehicles, stranding motorists, blowing sewer covers, and ripping up pavement.** Six Presidential Disasters directly impacting the watershed have been issued between 1999 and 2011 due to flash flooding, with **estimated damages of \$69.8 million.**

The Bee Branch Watershed encompasses historic neighborhoods offering some of the community’s most affordable workforce housing. **Most residents are working families, many are elderly -- those least able to recover from repetitive flood loss.** For over a decade, businesses and homes have suffered losses from water damage and disinvestment. From 2004 to 2009, **commercial property values grew by 39% citywide – but fell by 6% in the flood prone area.**

In response, the City has engaged consultants, state and federal partners, citizen advisory committees, and the general public **to help create, fund, and implement a watershed plan to address the flooding.** The plan outlines improvements throughout the Bee Branch Watershed, improvements that will benefit upstream as well as downstream properties, a plan consistent with both the Dubuque County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Dubuque County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

The Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project is **a multi-phased, fiscally responsible investment. It reflects a holistic approach to mitigate flooding as it will also improve water quality, stimulate investment, and enhance the quality of life.** Having secured the necessary federal and state funding approvals, permits, and funding, Dubuque has pushed forward with planning, execution, and completion of three phases and the initiation of two more. The phases of the Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project are as follows:

Phase	Description	Status
1	Carter Road Detention Basin	Complete
2	West 32 nd Street Detention Basin	Complete
3	Historic Millwork District	Complete
4	Lower Bee Branch Creek Restoration	Under Construction
5	Flood Mitigation Gate Replacement	Under Design
6	Impervious Surface Reduction	Under Construction
7	Upper Bee Branch Creek Restoration	Under Design
8	22 nd Street Storm Sewer Improvements	Under Design
9	Flood Mitigation Maintenance Facility	Under Design
10	North End Storm Sewer Improvements	Under Design
11	Water Plant Flood Protection	Under Design
12	17 th Street Storm Sewer Improvements	Under Design

Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project - Executive Summary

Individually, the 12 phases of the project may provide some benefit. But flash flooding can be expected to occur until all of the improvements are implemented. But it is also true that with the completion of each subsequent phase, the threat of flash flood damage is lessened and the resulting damage will be mitigated.

Because of the public support for the Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project, the stated commitment of the City of Dubuque City Council to implement the various phases of the project, and because the City has already started implementing some of the improvements, **non-public investment in the Bee Branch Watershed has already eclipsed \$139 million since 2008 with an additional \$215 million expected to follow in the next five years for a combined total of \$354 million in non-public investment.**

Implementation of the complete Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project is possible only with the requested Sales Tax Increment funding.

The City of Dubuque has been fortunate to secure local, state, and federal financial assistance to the extent that the Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project is eligible for funding through the State Flood Mitigation Program. The total commitment in the **combination of local and federal funding will provide for 51% of the total project cost.** The City has secured more than the requisite **\$30 million in federal financial assistance**, with \$49 million in financial assistance through the federal Clean Water Act and \$1.2 million U.S. Economic Development Administration disaster relief grant, which is a federal program providing assistance specifically for hazard mitigation. And yet, even with the existing outside financial assistance, the cost of implementing all phases of the flood mitigation project is too steep for Dubuque citizens and businesses.

Of the more than 30 stormwater utilities across Iowa, Dubuque residents currently pay the second highest rate in the state. And even with the requested Sales Tax increment, a rate increase is necessary. **But to construct the Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project without the requested Sales Tax Increment, the rate would need to be increased by 248% which would significantly burden Dubuque businesses.**

The City of Dubuque has carefully developed a fiscally conservative funding plan for the multi-phased project. **The City is requesting less than \$7 million in sales tax increment in any given year, with an average annual request of less than \$5 million.** The requested \$98 million in Sales Tax Increment over 20 years is **less than 59% of the City's projected 70% increment.**

State Flood Mitigation Board approval of the City of Dubuque's Project by December 31, 2013 is critical. Timely approval will benefit the lives of thousands of watershed residents, businesses and employees, as well as halt the disinvestment occurring in the watershed. If approval is delayed until 2014, however, the projected sales tax increment would be negatively impacted and the City may need to adjust the timing of project phases.

The Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project will prevent an estimated \$582 million in damages over the 100-year design life of the project, with a return on investment for the State of Iowa of \$6.00 for each \$1.00 spent!