

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO A **RAINREADY BLUE ISLAND**



A RainReady Blue Island would be a community that continues to find innovative and effective ways to strengthen its homes and businesses and create new opportunities for sustainable economic development. It would be a community where residents, businesses, and local officials work together to implement and maintain community projects that create jobs, reduce flooding, beautify and connect neighborhoods in a way that is fair and transparent.

In order to better understand Blue Island's flooding risk, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the RainReady Blue Island Steering Committee, and the City of Blue Island joined together in February 2016. Throughout the year, this group met regularly, hosted community meetings, went door-to-door in the neighborhoods, held seven educational workshops and multiple Steering Committee meetings, and reviewed hundreds of plans and studies. 72 Blue Island residents filled out our flooding survey.

Together, we have established a shared vision and a path toward a flood-resilient Blue Island: The RainReady Blue Island Plan. This Citizen's Guide to a RainReady Blue Island covers the highlights of the plan, for more information visit www.rainready.org/calumet-corridor.

A Path Forward

Blue Island is a regional leader in adopting innovative approaches to stormwater management and economic development. The Mayor likes to think BIGG (Blue Island Going Green), and his administration has certainly walked the talk in this regard. The City was an early adopter of "green infrastructure" and began installing rain gardens and distributing rain barrels in 2013 to reduce flooding in its northeast neighborhood. The City now has a foundation of green infrastructure projects from which to learn, improve, and expand projects that reduce flooding and spur economic development.

Equipped with this RainReady Plan, the City now has a roadmap for reducing local flooding issues in a way that strengthens neighborhoods and business districts, bringing new life and vibrancy to vacant areas of town. In many instances, the City is already proactively engaged in many of the recommendations of this plan. This plan includes new project recommendations as well as creative ways to coordinate and accelerate various public and private projects that deliver flood relief and other community benefits.

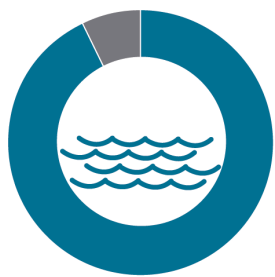
**KEEP READING FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE
PATH AHEAD FOR BLUE ISLAND!**



**US Army Corps
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Understanding the Problem

Like many of its neighbors, Blue Island has long been plagued by chronic flooding. In recent years, the scope and severity of the floods have become significantly worse. A combination of increased impervious surfaces, aging and limited infrastructure, and changes in regional climate have left Blue Island residents vulnerable across the city. From 2007 to 2011, 469 flood-related insurance claims were filed in the 60406 zip code, with more than \$1.2 million paid out in damages. In 2015, the broader Calumet Corridor in which Blue Island is located was identified by Cook County as the area that was “most impacted and distressed” by the April 2013 storms (DR-4116). Strategic policy changes and coordinated investment in green and grey infrastructure capital projects and ongoing maintenance will be part of the mix of solutions necessary to mitigate chronic flooding issues and large storms.



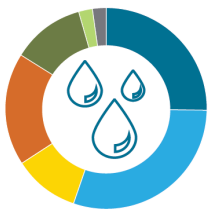
*Respondents experiencing flooding problems**

71 survey respondents

\$2,242 is the average amount spent on stormwater-related repairs

\$9,314 is the average amount residents are willing to invest to reduce risk of future damage

How does water enter properties?



- 24 Backing up through drains
- 28 Seeping through walls
- 10 Flowing through doors/windows
- 17 Pooling/ponding in yard
- 11 Overflow from street, creek, nearby body of water
- 2 Other
- 2 Don't know

What is the level of worry about flooding's impact on property value?



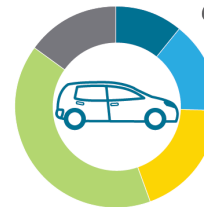
- Extremely worried 30%
- Very worried 11%
- Moderately worried 22%
- Slightly worried 19%
- Not at all worried 19%

How much do heavy rains impact quality of life?



- 33% A great deal
- 29% A lot
- 21% A moderate amount
- 17% A little
- 13% Not at all

How much do heavy rains impact commute or other travel?



- A great deal 11%
- A lot 15%
- A moderate amount 19%
- A little 41%
- Not at all 15%

What is the preparedness of the community to work together to find a solution?



- 11% Extremely prepared
- 18% Very prepared
- 11% Moderately prepared
- 25% Slightly prepared
- 36% Not at all prepared

*Respondents who answered "Yes, I experience problems" and "I do not experience problems anymore" were grouped into the "Yes" category because both sets of respondents experience ongoing flooding problems or have experienced problems in the past, respectively.

Data Source: CNT Survey, 2016

Planning the Solutions

Blue Island's path toward flood resilience will require coordinated action at multiple levels—from the individual home to the broader region. Fortunately, community residents, municipal staff, and elected representatives are aligned in their desire for a more beautiful, flood-resilient community. This RainReady Plan recommends the following priority projects, which were taken from a comprehensive list of recommendations:

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Renew and expand Blue Island's residential cost-sharing program to help homeowners recover from past storms and prepare for future storms. Under this program, residents would receive financial support for a complete home inspection and improvements targeted to reduce risk, like check valves, overhead sewers, and a rain garden.

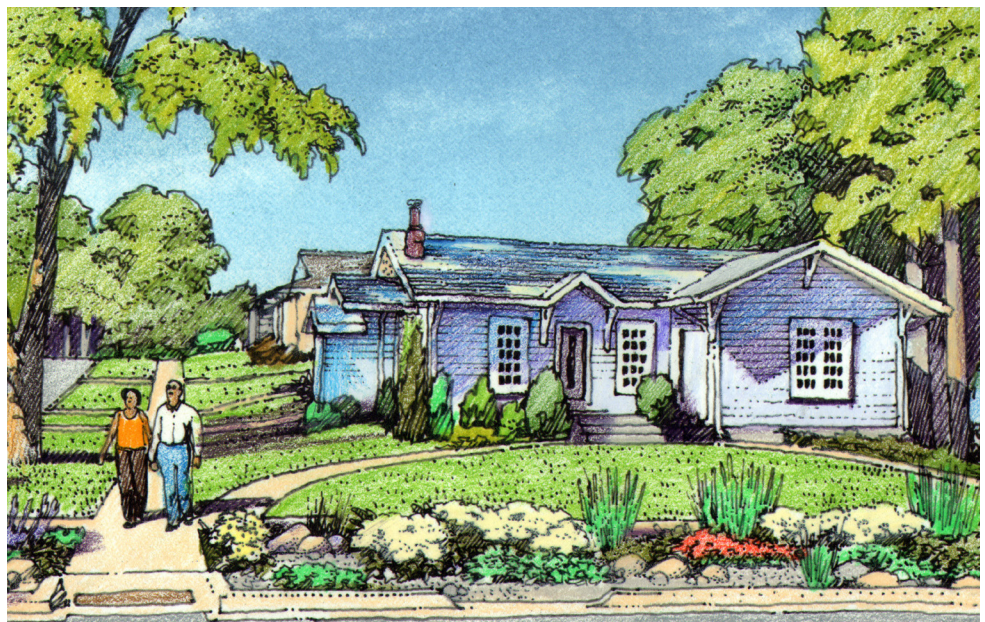
WESTERN AVENUE BEAUTIFICATION

Western Avenue is slated for improvements thanks to local leadership setting up the Business Development District. The City should continue its practice of incorporating green infrastructure (planter boxes, tree plantings, and bioswales) into planned improvements such as streetscapes and the public right-of-way. These types of improvements will beautify the corridor while reducing stormwater runoff into the local sewers.



NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD

The northeast neighborhood of Blue Island, "the bowl," has been known to flood for many years. The City of Blue Island has succeeded in securing numerous grants and partnerships that are dedicated to reducing flooding and beautifying the neighborhood. With support from MWRD, a coordinated investment in green and grey infrastructure is expected to occur in 2017. The City should continue to coordinate with the MWRD and other partners to implement and maintain concentrated and integrated green and grey infrastructure projects.



Quick Steps

We know that residents experience flooding every summer, and the need for help is urgent. Here are 7 solutions that homeowners should consider to reduce their risk today:

- **ASSESS YOUR PROPERTY.**

The first step to solving your flood problem is to understand how water falls on your property and flows through your pipes. If you have significant problems, you may need the help of an engineer, plumber, electrician, or landscape designer.

- **MAKE YARD IMPROVEMENTS.**

In order to reduce flooding, capture stormwater runoff using rain gardens, swales, dry wells, permeable paving, rain barrels, or cisterns.

- **ELEVATE YOUR APPLIANCES.**

If water regularly enters your home, place appliances, furnaces, hot water heaters, and electrical panels above the typical flood level on wood or concrete blocks.

- **HAVE YOUR BUILDING SEWERS CHECKED.**

Faulty pipes connecting your home to the municipal sewer system can exacerbate foundation damage and flooding in your home. Ensure that grease, waste, or tree roots are not obstructing the pipe and preventing wastewater from leaving the house.

- **RECLAIM YOUR PARKWAY.**

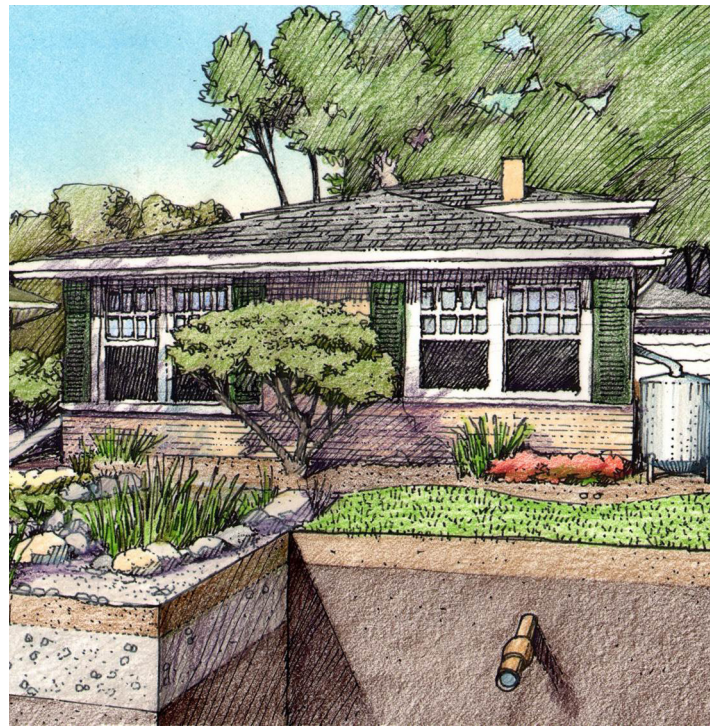
The strips between sidewalks and streets can be transformed into attractive green spaces that absorb stormwater runoff, reduce municipal maintenance costs, and beautify streets. Be sure to check your municipal code for which plants are permitted.

- **GET INSURED.**

There are several options available to protect you against the risk of water damage, including home insurance policies, flood insurance riders, and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), established by FEMA and administered by your local insurance companies.

- **ADVOCATE FOR THE RAINREADY PLAN.**

This plan outlines solutions to community wide flooding. Get involved in your local Steering Committee to make sure the plan is implemented!



GET INVOLVED!

Blue Island has a RainReady Blue Island Steering Committee that meets monthly!

For more information contact Rebecca Raines at rraines@cnt.org or 773.269.2217.