

# RainReady Calumet City

## A Snapshot of Resilience



*RainReady helps people manage flooding in a time of climate change. Our team includes urban planners, engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, economic development experts, outreach specialists, and lawyers.*

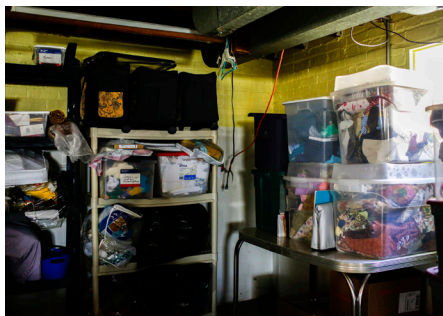
In the 123 years since incorporation, Calumet City has been home to meatpackers, beer brewers, printmakers, and famed bootlegger Al Capone. These days, River Oaks Center draws shoppers from across the South Suburbs, the new Public Library and Police Department set a standard for public excellence, and Calumet City public schools empower young people to be leaders in the community. The City still conducts business from its original, brick-laid City Hall building.



Chronic and severe flooding impact residents and businesses of Calumet City. From 2007 to 2011, 4,620 flood-related insurance claims were filed, with more than \$12,603,844 dollars paid out in damages (CNT, 2014). Flooding in Calumet City exacerbates existing challenges, such as maintaining older homes, economic divestment, and aging public infrastructure.

RainReady is bringing new attention to the fight against flooding. In 2015, Cook County collaborated with city staff and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) to identify flooding solutions for a competitive federal grant application. Although the application was unsuccessful, the County remains committed to providing relief in Calumet City through RainReady.

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS



**Kimberly Harris** bought her Calumet City home in 2009 and never had a problem with flooding until 2014, when a massive storm left much of the Southland underwater. Her street

flooded and a neighbor—who has since moved out—had two feet of water in the basement. Ms. Harris says that sewage gurgled up her basement drain during that storm, ruining the extra food, blankets, and clothing she had stored in the basement.

“When it rains real bad, [sewage] comes up,” says Ms. Harris. A local contractor told her it would cost \$10,000 to install a sump pump, “I wish I had known about all that before I bought here.”

Ms. Harris doesn’t always flood and she doesn’t always get several feet of water. Rather, she has to monitor every rain, and plan to move clothing and things out of the way of the water that rises out her drains.

**Catrina Farr** is one of the lucky ones. Two years ago, the Calumet City resident was able to come up with the \$6,900 needed to install an overhead sewer system at her home. She also paid to have



her basement retarred around the exterior perimeter, a method sometimes used to stop seepage. None of that, however, helps her with her dream deferred: Ms. Farr planned to create a fashion line in her basement and bring in seamstresses to work in the space over the weekends. With the constant seepage and mold, she has not been able to realize this dream.

“It’s been horrible,” says Ms. Farr. “I’ll be honest. When I bought the home, I was told I wasn’t in a flood zone, so I didn’t get the flood insurance. So I had to take a loss.”

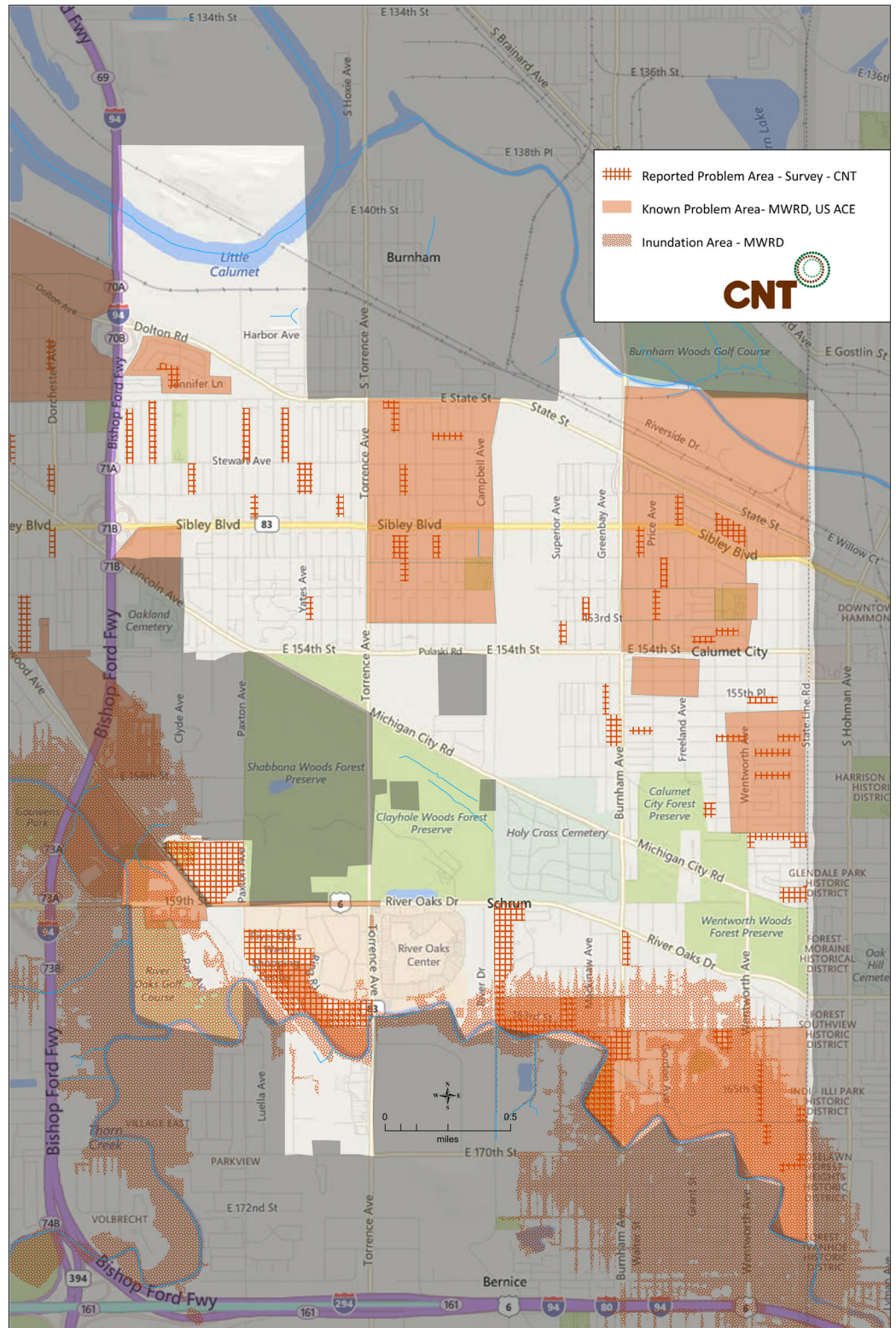
# WHERE IS IT FLOODING?

Residents and business owners in Calumet City experience several types of flooding:

- ✓ **Basement backup** from the local sewer system and private lateral lines, impacting several parts of town.
- ✓ **Street flooding** from local drainage issues, causing pooling in the street.
- ✓ **Foundation seepage** in several areas of Calumet City, causing rot and mold in basement walls.

Four main factors contribute to flooding in Calumet City:

- 1) **Increasing impervious surfaces:** as open lands are converted to parking lots, streets, and rooftops, rainwater finds fewer places to sink into the ground.
- 2) **Aging sewer infrastructure:** as sewer systems age, pipes may collapse causing local drainage issues.
- 3) **More severe storms:** climate change is bringing more frequent, high-intensity storms to the region.
- 4) **Flat topography:** most stormwater is directed via gravity, so Calumet City's flat streets create challenges for moving the water out of neighborhoods.



# NEARLY EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD IN CALUMET CITY IS VULNERABLE TO FLOODING



Of the 80 Calumet City residents who responded to our RainReady Survey, 81% report flooding at home during storms, including wet basements, basement backups, and water pooling in streets and yards. The average amount spent by Calumet City residents to clean up or prevent flooding is \$3,999.

## NORTHEAST CALUMET CITY (EAST OF BURNHAM GREENWAY AND NORTH OF MICHIGAN CITY ROAD)

Basement backups, foundation seepage, and occasional street flooding is common in northeast Calumet City. Further study will be needed to identify appropriate strategies to address these challenges, however, similar communities have found relief through a combination of private property upgrades and nature-based solutions.

A private property program could expand on the City's existing Overhead Sewer and Sump Pump Flood Assistance Rebate Program, to help homeowners identify the cause of flooding and implement appropriate private property solutions. Nature-based solutions can provide relief to the whole community, while increasing property values and creating more beautiful neighborhoods. These solutions are designed to soak up rain water and reduce the volume of water flowing into the sewer system, reducing basement backups. Nature-based solutions include tree plantings, rain gardens, permeable pavement, and native plantings, and can be installed at schools, parks like Memorial Park, public buildings like City Hall, parking lots, alleys, and private homes.

## NORTHWEST CALUMET CITY (WEST OF BURNHAM GREENWAY AND NORTH OF MICHIGAN CITY ROAD)

Calumet City has shown great leadership in maintaining its underground infrastructure. To alleviate street flooding and basement backups in the northwest part of town, the City has installed separate sanitary and storm sewers and constructed two retention basins since the 1980's. These investments and other flood control projects have reduced local flooding, but big storms still overwhelm the sewer system. When this happens, rain often pools in streets and yards, contributing to foundation seepage.

If left unresolved, seepage can cause mold and mildew, leading to structural concerns and respiratory illness. Fortunately, seepage can be stopped with relatively low cost solutions, like sealing cracks and re-grading land to slope away from the house. A private property program to assist homeowners with these types of improvements could help residents in northwest and northeast Calumet City.

## SOUTH CALUMET CITY (SOUTH OF MICHIGAN CITY ROAD)

Historically, flooding from the Little Calumet River has caused the most persistent trouble for residents in the southern parts of Calumet City. Fortunately, the recent opening of the Thornton Quarry Reservoir, engineering improvements along the Little Calumet River, and the purchase and clearing of flood-prone properties have greatly reduced instances of flooding in the neighborhood. However, we anticipate an increase in high-intensity storms associated with global climate change, which have the potential to overwhelm these safeguards. City staff are working with RainReady and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to increase the resilience of existing flood protection systems.

The success of this effort depends on your active participation. RainReady provides expertise in stormwater management and financing strategies, but residents, business owners, and local officials must help by identifying flood-prone areas and guiding investment decisions.

## 5 WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR FLOOD RISK TODAY

- ✓ **ASSESS YOUR PROPERTY:**  
To reduce risk, you must understand the way water moves across your property. An engineer, plumber, electrician, or landscape designer can help, but often you can identify the cause of flooding by walking the property and taking photos during a storm.
- ✓ **MAKE YARD IMPROVEMENTS:**  
Plant trees and native plants to soak up the water in your yard and parkway. Regrade your yard and redirect gutter downspouts so that water drains away from your home.
- ✓ **MANAGE WATER WITHIN YOUR HOME:**  
Prepare your basement for water. Lift appliances off the floor, put valuables in plastic storage bins, and consider investing in a sump pump, backup generator, backwater valve, overhead sewer, or drain tiles.
- ✓ **GET INSURED:**  
Educate yourself about insurance policies and invest in the best policy for your needs. Most home insurance policies do not cover flood damage. You can purchase a sewer rider to cover basement backup, or look into the National Flood Insurance Program if you experience riverine flooding. No insurance covers damage from foundation seepage.
- ✓ **EXPECT AND PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER:**  
If the experts predict rain, prepare your home. Clear your drainage areas, secure your windows and doors, and check your sump pump. If you experienced flooding, call your flood insurance company to file a claim. Even if you aren't covered, note the date and time as well as the depth of the water. Document and photograph items that were damaged, including their estimated value.

RainReady is working with the communities of Blue Island, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Dolton, Riverdale, and Robbins to better understand the impact of heavy rain on the community in order to reduce or eliminate flooding.

This work builds upon the County's Disaster Resilience effort in 2015.

**Have you completed the survey yet?** You may be eligible for a free risk assessment and home upgrade.

All residents are encouraged to complete the survey here: <http://bit.ly/RainReadySurvey>

○ para español visita a la página: <http://bit.ly/RRSespanol>

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **RAINREADY HOME: SOLUTIONS TO BASEMENT FLOODING AND INSURANCE 101**

September 7 | 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm | Blue Island Public Library, 2433 York Street, Blue Island

September 13 | 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm | Dolton Public Library, 14037 Lincoln Avenue, Dolton

#### **ORGANIZING FOR RESILIENCE: WORK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS TO STOP FLOODING**

September 28 | 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm | Midlothian Public Library, 14701 Kenton Avenue, Midlothian

#### **HOW TO MANAGE FLOODING: TOUR OF BEST PRACTICES**

September 15 | 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm | SSMMA, 1904 W. 174<sup>th</sup> Street, East Hazel Crest



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Questions? Contact Rebecca Raines:  
RRaines@CNT.org or 773.269.2217

