

Neighborhood Flooding Prevention in Action

Chicago's Chatham Neighborhood



Homeowner Lori Burns had experienced multiple instances of flooding in the basement of a bungalow in the Chatham neighborhood of Chicago that had been in her family for many years. An active member of her community, Lori attended an event hosted by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) at a local church, and after telling her story, she applied to participate in the RainReady Home program. She got help finding the right set of solutions that will help to reduce the risk of her home flooding in the future.

RainReady Home is a service for homeowners and building owners that evaluates flooding issues and coordinates the installation of flood prevention measures. Lori has experienced significant water backup in another property, and after she connected with the program she became an active partner in helping to educate her neighbors about the potential community-scale benefits of investing in flood reduction measures on their block.

The RainReady Home team visited Lori's home to conduct a holistic site assessment, which includes: collection of previous flood information; examination of the building foundation, basement, and landscape; camera inspection of the home sewer; and observation of the adjacent properties and stormwater rights of way.

The team confirmed that water was entering the home from two locations: through floor drains when heavy rain overwhelms the municipal sewer capacity, and through porous foundation walls in the basement. Additionally, the team found that the building's downspouts remained connected at the east and west facades to the home sewer, potentially compounding the water backup problem during heavy rain events. The assessment results were included in a detailed report, helping the home owner find the solution that fit her needs.

Lori had limited ability to invest in flood risk reduction measures. But thanks to the expert guidance of our RainReady Home analysis team,



ABOUT THE PROPERTY

- Single-family home constructed in 1926 (approx.)
- 1,002-square-foot bungalow
- 3,687-square-foot lot
- Owned by Lori Burrs since 2010

FLOODING ISSUES

- Sewer backup and foundation seepage
- Average insurance claims for water-backup damage in the Chatham ZIP code between 2007 and 2011: \$7,723

UPGRADES COMPLETED

- Installed backwater valve
- Disconnected downspout and added an extension
- Rerouted gutters
- Designed and installed a rain garden
- Total cost of retrofit measures: \$4,850

To learn more about the program, visit:

WWW.RAINREADY.ORG

If you have questions about the program, please contact:

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she was able to implement a suite of coordinated plumbing and landscape solutions for just under \$5,000. The team’s recommendations included the following improvements:

- Install a backwater valve on mainline home sewer
- Re-pitch gutters and discharge all downspouts to lawn or raingardens
- Install a raingarden to capture discharge from downspout

The RainReady Home team helped streamline the process, including finding a quality contractor with experience installing similar systems to complete the project. The first round of bids for landscape work and backwater valve installation were priced too high, so the team went back out to find contractors who could provide high quality work at a lower cost

to the homeowner, and Lori’s backwater valve was installed in the spring of 2014. Our analysts used the opportunity to host an outreach event during the installation, so that neighbors could see firsthand what an installation might look like at their properties. The event resulted in seven new applications to the program.

For rain garden installation, Lori worked with a company offering landscaping with plants native to the region. She chose to install the raingarden in her front yard, and she was excited that the landscaper offered her the opportunity to tour one of their nearby projects. All of the work on the home was completed in September 2014. Lori looks forward to enjoying a dry and comfortable home in the future.

RainReady services are available to participating communities. Towns or cities wishing to offer the services to their residents will draw up a memorandum of agreement with CNT and agree to cover the costs of managing the program.

RainReadySM is a program of the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), a Chicago-based nonprofit research and advocacy organization committed to improving urban economies and environments across the United States.