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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Dubuque Celebrates Opening of Bee Branch Creek Greenway

DUBUQUE, Iowa – A ribbon-cutting ceremony and community celebration were held in Dubuque today to mark the opening of the Bee Branch Creek Greenway, a major component of the comprehensive Bee Branch Creek Watershed Flood Mitigation Project.

The greenway project was completed under budget and ahead of schedule. The project design, including the creek alignment and amenities (even bench designs), was guided by input solicited from neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

The construction of the greenway included the restoration of the upper section of the Bee Branch Creek by replacing almost a half-mile of storm sewer with a creek and floodplain that resembles the one that traversed the area approximately 100 years ago. This “day-lighting” of the buried Bee Branch Creek now allows storm water from flash floods to safely move through the area without flooding adjacent properties.

The construction phase of the \$60 million greenway project began in 2015, following the acquisition of over 100 properties and deconstruction or removal of structures on those properties. Construction included the removal of the old storm sewer, excavation of 200,000 cubic yards of earth (the equivalent of 20,000 dump truck loads), construction of three bridges, and installation of a multiuse, concrete trail on the northeast side for the full length of the creek. Sidewalks, walking paths, lighting, and benches also line the creek corridor. A stepped amphitheater between East 22nd Street and Lincoln Avenue provides a venue for teaching and neighborhood gatherings. The greenway also contains a play area with slides and will include a community orchard.

The Bee Branch Creek Greenway project is a major component of the overall Bee Branch Watershed Project but it is not the end of the overall project nor will the full benefits of the project be realized until all phases are completed. However, with the completion of each phase, the risk of flooding has been incrementally reduced. City officials are very pleased with how the system performed during last week’s storm. Each of the 80 pervious, “green” alleys, of the 240 planned for the project, soaked up storm water. The Carter Road and W. 32nd Street Detention Basins held back millions of gallons of storm water and the Bee Branch Creek Greenway worked as designed, providing the critical capacity to accept storm water, filling up shortly after the rainfall and then gradually draining within 24 hours. This functionality prevents the flash flooding in

streets and flooded basements the area has experienced in the past. Future phases of the overall project include the construction of additional culverts under the railroad tracks as well as increasing the capacity of the storm sewers that drain into the greenway.

The restoration of the Upper Bee Branch Creek is one of the 12 phases of the overall Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project, which includes detention basins, impervious surface reduction through green alleys, storm sewer improvements, flood gate replacement, the Bee Branch Healthy Homes Resiliency Program, and more. To date, the City of Dubuque has received \$160 million to help fund the \$219 million project, including \$52.1 million in state and federal grants. Most recently, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded \$31.5 million in disaster resiliency funds to the City for the Bee Branch Healthy Homes Resiliency Program and storm water infrastructure improvements including the West Locust Street and Kaufmann Avenue storm sewer projects and \$9 million for the Bee Branch Creek railroad culverts.

The Bee Branch Watershed is approximately 6.5 square miles, stretching from the Mississippi River west past John F. Kennedy Road, north to the Northwest Arterial, and south to West Fifth Street. Over 50 percent of Dubuque residents either work or live in the Bee Branch Watershed. According to a 2009 FEMA study, 1,373 homes and businesses in the watershed are prone to flooding including 70 businesses. Those 70 businesses employ over 1,400 people and have more than \$500 million in annual sales. Flood disasters have repeatedly impacted residents and employees of the businesses within the watershed. Between 1999 and 2011, six Presidential Disaster Declarations were issued with total damage estimates of almost \$70 million.

For more information about the Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project, visit www.cityofdubuque.org/beebranch or call 563-690-6068.

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